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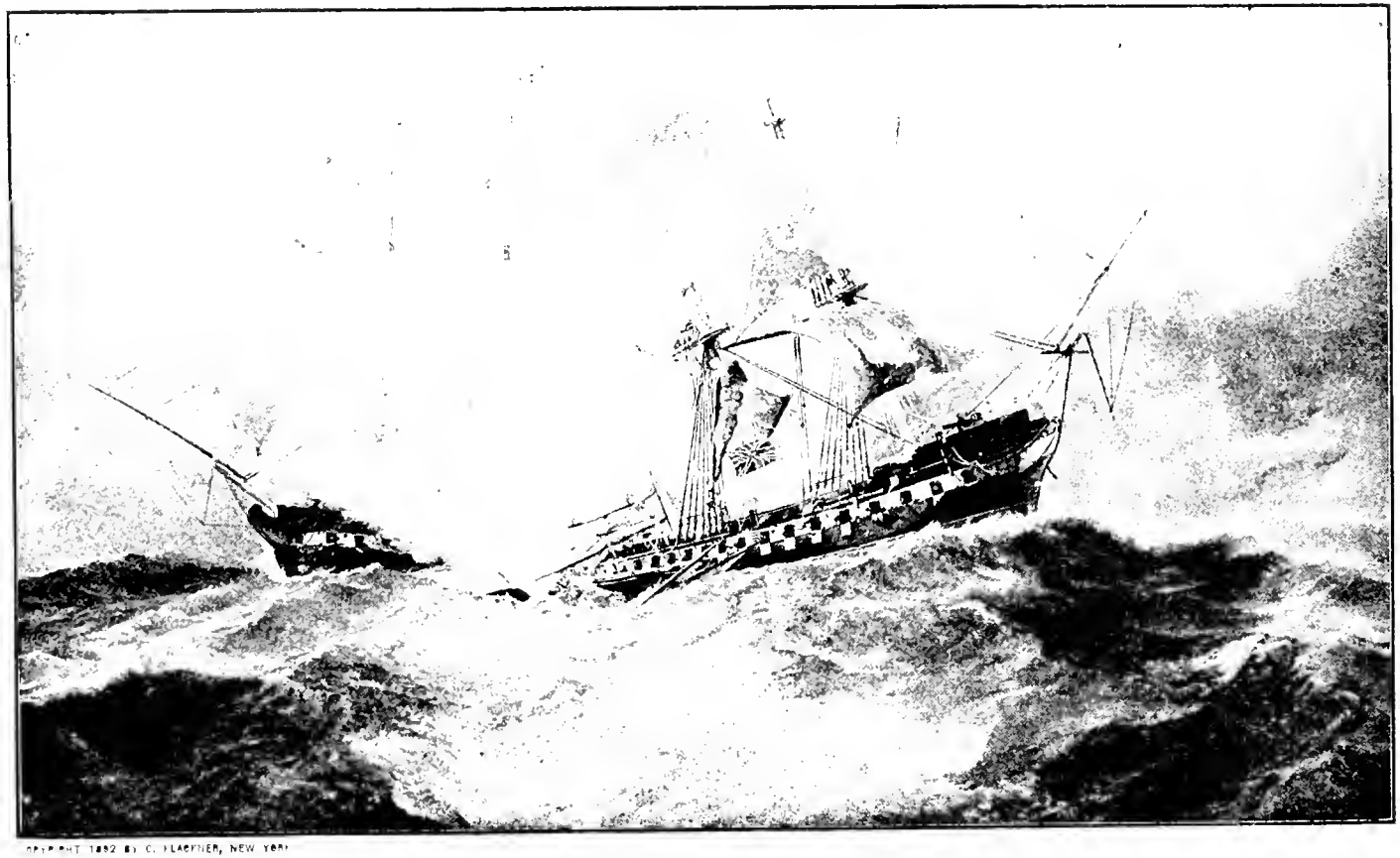

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THE "UNITED STATES" AND THE "MACEDONIAN"

In one of the notable duels of the war, Decatur, with the "United States," disabled and captured the British frigate "Macedonian"

THE WORKS OF

# HEODORE OOSEVELT

IN FOURTEEN VOLUMES

*Illustrated*

# IE AVAL AR OF 1812

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY DURING
THE LAST WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN, TO
WHICH IS APPENDED AN ACCOUNT OF

## THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

PART ONE

xecutive dition

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# PREFACE

THE history of the naval events of the War of 1812 has been repeatedly presented both to the American and the English reader. Historical writers have treated it either in connection with a general account of the contest on land and sea, or as forming a part of the complete record of the navies of the two nations. A few monographs, which confine themselves strictly to the naval occurrences, have also appeared. But none of these works can be regarded as giving a satisfactorily full or impartial account of the war—some of them being of the "popular" and loosely-constructed order, while others treat it from a purely partisan standpoint. No single book can be quoted which would be accepted by the modern reader as doing justice to both sides, or, indeed, as telling the whole story. Any one specially interested in the subject must read all, and then it will seem almost a hopeless task to reconcile the many and widely contradictory statements he will meet with.

There appear to be three works which, taken in

combination, give the best satisfaction on the subject. First, in James's "Naval History of Great Britain" (which supplies both the material and the opinions of almost every subsequent English or Canadian historian) can be found the British view of the case. It is an invaluable work, written with fulness and care; on the other hand, it is also a piece of special pleading by a bitter and not overscrupulous partisan. This, in the second place, can be partially supplemented by Fenimore Cooper's "Naval History of the United States." The latter gives the American view of the cruises and battles; but it is much less of an authority than James's, both because it is written without great regard for exactness, and because all figures for the American side need to be supplied from Lieutenant (now Admiral) George E. Emmons's statistical "History of the United States Navy," which is the third of the works in question.

But even after comparing these three authors, many contradictions remain unexplained, and the truth can only be reached in such cases by a careful examination of the navy "Records," the London "Naval Chronicle," "Niles's Register," and other similar documentary publications. Almost the only good criticisms on the actions are those incidentally given in standard works on other subjects, such as

Lord Howard Douglas's "Naval Gunnery," and Admiral Jurien de la Gravière's "Guerres Maritimes." Much of the material in our Navy Department has never been touched at all. In short, no full, accurate, and unprejudiced history of the war has ever been written.

The subject merits a closer scrutiny than it has received. At present people are beginning to realize that it is folly for the great English-speaking Republic to rely for defence upon a navy composed partly of antiquated hulks, and partly of new vessels rather more worthless than the old. It is worth while to study with some care that period of our history during which our navy stood at the highest pitch of its fame; and to learn anything from the past it is necessary to know, as near as may be, the exact truth. Accordingly, the work should be written impartially, if only from the narrowest motives. Without abating a jot from one's devotion to his country and flag, I think a history can be made just enough to warrant its being received as an authority equally among Americans and Englishmen. I have endeavored to supply such a work. It is impossible that errors, both of fact and opinion, should not have crept into it; and although I have sought to make it in character as non-partisan as possible, these errors will probably be in favor of the American side.

As my only object is to give an accurate narrative of events, I shall esteem it a particular favor if any one will furnish me with the means of rectifying such mistakes; and if I have done injustice to any commander, or officer of any grade, whether American or British, I shall consider myself under great obligations to those who will set me right.

I have been unable to get access to the original reports of the British commanders, the logs of the British ships, or their muster-rolls, and so have been obliged to take them at second hand from the "Gazette," or "Naval Chronicle," or some standard history. The American official letters, log-books, original contracts, muster-rolls, etc., however, being preserved in the Archives at Washington, I have been able, thanks to the courtesy of the Hon. Wm. H. Hunt, Secretary of the Navy, to look them over. The set of letters from the officers is very complete, in three series, — "Captains' Letters," "Masters' Commandant Letters," and "Officers' Letters," there being several volumes for each year. The books of contracts contain valuable information as to the size and build of some of the vessels. The log-books are rather exasperating, often being very incomplete. Thus when I turned from Decatur's extremely vague official letter describing the capture of the *Macedonian* to the log-book of the frigate

*United States,* not a fact about the fight could be gleaned. The last entry in the log on the day of the fight is "Strange sail discovered to be a frigate under English colors," and the next entry (on the following day) relates to the removal of the prisoners. The log of the *Enterprise* is very full indeed, for most of the time, but is a perfect blank for the period during which she was commanded by Lieutenant Burrows, and in which she fought the *Boxer*. I have not been able to find the *Peacock's* log at all, though there is a very full set of letters from her commander. Probably the fire of 1837 destroyed a great deal of valuable material. Whenever it was possible I have referred to printed matter in preference to manuscript, and my authorities can thus, in most cases, be easily consulted.

In conclusion I desire to express my sincerest thanks to Captain James D. Bulloch, formerly of the United States Navy, and Commander Adolf Mensing, formerly of the German Navy, without whose advice and sympathy this work would probably never have been written or even begun.

New York City, 1882.

# PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

I ORIGINALLY intended to write a companion volume to this, which should deal with the operations on land. But a short examination showed that these operations were hardly worth serious study. They teach nothing new; it is the old, old lesson, that a miserly economy in preparation may in the end involve a lavish outlay of men and money, which, after all, comes too late to more than partially offset the evils produced by the original short-sighted parsimony. This might be a lesson worth dwelling on did it have any practical bearing on the issues of the present day; but it has none, as far as the army is concerned. It was criminal folly for Jefferson, and his follower, Madison, to neglect to give us a force either of regulars or of well-trained volunteers during the twelve years they had in which to prepare for the struggle that any one might see was inevitable; but there is now far less need of an army than there was then. Circumstances have altered widely since 1812. Instead of the decaying might of Spain on our Southern frontier, we have the still weaker power of Mexico. Instead of the great Indian nations of the interior, able to keep civilization at bay, to hold in check strong armies,

to ravage large stretches of territory, and needing formidable military expeditions to overcome them, there are now only left broken and scattered bands which are sources of annoyance merely. To the North we are still hemmed in by the Canadian possessions of Great Britain; but since 1812 our strength has increased so prodigiously, both absolutely and relatively, while England's military power has remained almost stationary, that we need now be under no apprehensions from her land-forces; for, even if checked in the beginning, we could not help conquering in the end by sheer weight of numbers, if by nothing else. So that there is now no cause for our keeping up a large army; while, on the contrary, the necessity for an efficient navy is so evident that only our almost incredible short-sightedness prevents our at once preparing one.

Not only do the events of the war on land teach very little to the statesman who studies history in order to avoid in the present the mistakes of the past, but besides this, the battles and campaigns are of very little interest to the student of military matters. The British regulars, trained in many wars, thrashed the raw troops opposed to them whenever they had anything like a fair chance; but this is not to be wondered at, for the same thing has always happened the world over under similar conditions. Our defeats were exactly such as any man might have foreseen, and there is nothing to be learned from the follies committed by incompetent commanders and untrained troops when in the presence

of skilled officers having under them disciplined soldiers. The humiliating surrenders, abortive attacks, and panic routs of our armies can all be paralleled in the campaigns waged by Napoleon's marshals against the Spaniards and Portuguese in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of our own war. The Peninsular troops were as little able to withstand the French veterans as were our militia to hold their own against the British regulars. But it must always be remembered, to our credit, that while seven years of fighting failed to make the Spaniards able to face the French,[1] two years of warfare gave us soldiers who could stand against the best men of Britain. On the Northern frontier we never developed a great general,—Brown's claim to the title rests only on his not having committed the phenomenal follies of his predecessors,—but by 1814 our soldiers had become seasoned, and we had acquired some good brigade commanders, notably Scott, so that in that year we played on even terms with the British. But the battles, though marked by as bloody and obstinate fighting as ever took place, were waged between small bodies of men, and were not distinguished by any feats of generalship, so that they are not of any special interest to the historian. In fact, the only really noteworthy feat

[1] At the closing battle of Toulouse, fought between the allies and the French, the flight of the Spaniards was so rapid and universal as to draw from the Duke of Wellington the bitter observation, that "though he had seen a good many remarkable things in the course of his life, yet this was the first time he had ever seen ten thousand men running a race."

of arms of the war took place at New Orleans, and the only military genius that the struggle developed was Andrew Jackson. His deeds are worthy of all praise, and the battle he won was in many ways so peculiar as to make it well worth a much closer study than it has yet received. It was by far the most prominent event of the war; it was a victory which reflected high honor on the general and soldiers who won it, and it was in its way as remarkable as any of the great battles that took place about the same time in Europe. Such being the case, I have devoted a chapter to its consideration at the conclusion of the chapters devoted to the naval operations.

As before said, the other campaigns on land do not deserve very minute attention; but, for the sake of rendering the account of the battle of New Orleans more intelligible, I will give a hasty sketch of the principal engagements that took place elsewhere.

The war opened in mid-summer of 1812, by the campaign of General Hull on the Michigan frontier. With two or three thousand raw troops he invaded Canada. About the same time Fort Mackinaw was surrendered by its garrison of 60 Americans to a British and Indian force of 600. Hull's campaign was unfortunate from the beginning. Near Brownstown the American Colonel Van Horne, with some 200 men, was ambushed and routed by Tecumseh and his Indians. In revenge Colonel Miller, with 600 Americans, at Maguaga attacked 150 British

and Canadians under Captain Muir, and 250 Indians under Tecumseh, and whipped them,—Tecumseh's Indians standing their ground longest. The Americans lost 75, their foes 180 men. At Chicago the small force of 66 Americans was surprised and massacred by the Indians. Meanwhile, General Brock, the British commander, advanced against Hull with a rapidity and decision that seemed to paralyze his senile and irresolute opponent. The latter retreated to Detroit, where, without striking a blow, he surrendered 1,400 men to Brock's nearly equal force, which consisted nearly one-half of Indians under Tecumseh. On the Niagara frontier, an estimable and honest old gentleman and worthy citizen, who knew nothing of military matters, Gen. Van Rensselaer, tried to cross over and attack the British at Queenstown; 1,100 Americans got across and were almost all killed or captured by an equal number of British, Canadians, and Indians, while on the opposite side a larger number of their countrymen looked on, and with abject cowardice refused to cross to their assistance. The command of the army was then handed over to a ridiculous personage named Smythe, who issued proclamations so bombastic that they really must have come from an unsound mind, and then made a ludicrously abortive effort at invasion, which failed almost of its own accord. A British and Canadian force of less than 400 men was foiled in an assault on Ogdensburg, after a slight skirmish, by about 1,000 Americans under Brown;

and with this trifling success the military operations of the year came to an end.

Early in 1813, Ogdensburg was again attacked, this time by between 500 and 600 British, who took it after a brisk resistance from some 300 militia; the British lost 60 and the Americans 20, in killed and wounded. General Harrison, meanwhile, had begun the campaign in the Northwest. At Frenchtown, on the river Raisin, Winchester's command of about 900 Western troops was surprised by a force of 1,100 men, half of them Indians, under the British Colonel Proctor. The right division, taken by surprise, gave up at once; the left division, mainly Kentucky riflemen, and strongly posted in houses and stockaded inclosures, made a stout resistance, and only surrendered after a bloody fight, in which 180 British and about half as many Indians were killed or wounded. Over 300 Americans were slain, some in the battle, but most in the bloody massacre that followed. After this, General Harrison went into camp at Fort Meigs, where, with about 1,100 men, he was besieged by 1,000 British and Canadians under Proctor and 1,200 Indians under Tecumseh. A force of 1,200 Kentucky militia advanced to his relief and tried to cut its way into the fort while the garrison made a sortie. The sortie was fairly successful, but the Kentuckians were scattered like chaff by the British regulars in the open, and when broken were cut to pieces by the Indians in the woods. Nearly two-thirds of the relieving troops were killed or captured; about 400 got into the fort.

Soon afterward Proctor abandoned the siege. Fort Stephenson, garrisoned by Major Croghan and 160 men, was attacked by a force of 391 British regulars, who tried to carry it by assault, and were repulsed with the loss of a fourth of their number. Some four thousand Indians joined Proctor, but most of them left him after Perry's victory on Lake Erie. Then Harrison, having received large reinforcements, invaded Canada. At the River Thames his army of 3,500 men encountered and routed between 600 and 700 British under Proctor, and about 1,000 Indians under Tecumseh. The battle was decided at once by a charge of the Kentucky mounted riflemen, who broke through the regulars, took them in rear, and captured them, and then dismounting attacked the flank of the Indians, who were also assailed by the infantry. Proctor escaped by the skin of his teeth and Tecumseh died fighting, like the hero that he was. This battle ended the campaign in the Northwest. In this quarter it must be remembered that the war was, on the part of the Americans, mainly one against Indians; the latter always forming over half of the British forces. Many of the remainder were French Canadians, and the others were regulars. The American armies, on the contrary, were composed of the armed settlers of Kentucky and Ohio, native Americans, of English speech and blood, who were battling for lands that were to form the heritage of their children. In the West the war was only the closing act of the struggle that for many years had been

waged by the hardy and restless pioneers of our race, as with rifle and axe they carved out the mighty empire that we their children inherit; it was but the final effort with which they wrested from the Indian lords of the soil the wide and fair domain that now forms the heart of our great Republic. It was the breaking down of the last barrier that stayed the flood of our civilization; it settled, once and forever, that henceforth the law, the tongue, and the blood of the land should be neither Indian, nor yet French, but English. The few French of the West were fighting against a race that was to leave as little trace of them as of the doomed Indian peoples with whom they made common cause. The presence of the British mercenaries did not alter the character of the contest; it merely served to show the bitter and narrow hatred with which the Mother-Island regarded her greater daughter, predestined as the latter was to be queen of the lands that lay beyond the Atlantic.

Meanwhile, on Lake Ontario, the Americans made successful descents on York and Fort George, scattering or capturing their comparatively small garrisons, while a counter descent by the British on Sackett's Harbor failed, the attacking force being too small. After the capture of Fort George, the Americans invaded Canada; but their advance guard, 1,400 strong, under Generals Chandler and Winder, was surprised in the night by 800 British, who, advancing with the bayonet, broke up the camp, capturing both the generals and half the artillery.

Though the assailants, who lost 220 of their small number, suffered much more than the Americans, yet the latter were completely demoralized, and at once retreated to Fort George. Soon afterward, Col. Boerstler with about 600 men surrendered with shamefully brief resistance to a somewhat smaller force of British and Indians. Then about 300 British crossed the Niagara to attack Black Rock, which they took, but were afterward driven off by a large body of militia with the loss of 40 men. Later in the season the American General McClure wantonly burned the village of Newark, and then retreated in panic flight across the Niagara. In retaliation the British in turn crossed the river; 600 regulars surprised and captured in the night Fort Niagara, with its garrison of 400 men; two thousand troopers attacked Black Rock, and, after losing over a hundred men in a smart engagement with somewhat over 1,500 militia whom they easily dispersed, captured and burned both it and Buffalo. Before these last events took place another invasion of Canada had been attempted, this time under General Wilkinson, "an unprincipled imbecile," as Scott very properly styled him. It was mismanaged in every possible way, and was a total failure; it was attended with but one battle, that of Chrystler's Farm, in which 1,000 British, with the loss of less than 200 men, beat back double their number of Americans, who lost nearly 500 men and also one piece of artillery. The American army near Lake Champlain had done nothing, its commander, General Wade

Hampton, being, if possible, even more incompetent than Wilkinson. He remained stationary while a small force of British plundered Plattsburg and Burlington; then, with 5,000 men he crossed into Canada, but returned almost immediately, after a small skirmish at Chauteaugay between his advance guard and some 500 Canadians, in which the former lost 41 and the latter 22 men. This affair, in which hardly a tenth of the American force was engaged, has been, absurdly enough, designated a "battle" by most British and Canadian historians. In reality it was the incompetency of their general and not the valor of their foes that caused the retreat of the Americans. The same comment, by the way, applies to the so-called "Battle" of Plattsburg, in the following year, which may have been lost by Sir George Prevost, but was certainly not won by the Americans. And, again, a similar criticism should be passed on General Wilkinson's attack on La Colle Mill, near the head of the same lake. Neither one of the three affairs was a stand-up fight; in each a greatly superior force, led by an utterly incapable general, retreated after a slight skirmish with an enemy whose rout would have been a matter of certainty had the engagement been permitted to grow serious.

In the early spring of 1814 a small force of 160 American regulars, under Captain Holmes, fighting from behind felled logs, routed 200 British with a loss of 65 men, they themselves losing but 8. On Lake Ontario the British made a descent on Oswego

and took it by fair assault; and afterward lost 180 men who tried to cut out some American transports, and were killed or captured to a man. All through the spring and early summer the army on the Niagara frontier was carefully drilled by Brown, and more especially by Scott, and the results of this drilling were seen in the immensely improved effectiveness of the soldiers in the campaign that opened in July. Fort Erie was captured with little resistance, and on the 4th of July, at the river Chippeway, Brown, with two brigades of regulars, each about 1,200 strong, under Scott and Ripley, and a brigade of 800 militia and Indians under Porter, making a total of about 3,200 men, won a stand-up fight against the British General Riall, who had nearly 2,500 men, 1,800 of them regulars. Porter's brigade opened by driving in the Canadian militia and the Indians; but was itself checked by the British light-troops. Ripley's brigade took very little part in the battle, three of the regiments not being engaged at all, and the fourth so slightly as to lose but five men. The entire brunt of the action was borne by Scott's brigade, which was fiercely attacked by the bulk of the British regulars under Riall. The latter advanced with great bravery, but were terribly cut up by the fire of Scott's regulars; and when they had come nearly up to him, Scott charged with the bayonet and drove them clean off the field. The American loss was 322, including 23 Indians; the British loss was 515, excluding that of the Indians. The number of Americans actually engaged did not

exceed that of the British; and Scott's brigade, in fair fight, closed by a bayonet charge, defeated an equal force of British regulars.

On July 25th occurred the Battle of Niagara, or Lundy's Lane, fought between General Brown with 3,100[2] Americans and General Drummond with 3,500[3] British. It was brought on by accident in the evening, and was waged with obstinate courage and savage slaughter till midnight. On both sides the forces straggled into action by detachments. The Americans formed the attacking party. As before, Scott's brigade bore the brunt of the fight, and over half of his men were killed or wounded; he himself was disabled and borne from the field. The struggle was of the most desperate character, the combatants showing a stubborn courage that could not be surpassed.[4] Charge after charge was made with the bayonet, and the artillery was taken and retaken once and again. The loss was nearly

[2] As near as can be found out; most American authorities make it much less; Lossing, for example, says, only 2,400.

[3] General Drummond in his official letter makes it but 2,800; James, who gives the details, makes it 3,000 rank and file; adding 13 per cent for the officers, sergeants, and drummers, brings it up to 3,400; and we still have to count in the artillery drivers, etc.

[4] General Drummond writes: "In so determined a manner were their attacks directed against our guns that our artillerymen were bayoneted while in the act of loading, and the muzzle of the enemy's guns were advanced within a few yards of ours." Even James says: "Upon the whole, however, the American troops fought bravely; and the conduct of many of the officers, of the artillery corps especially, would have done honor to any service."

equal: on the side of the Americans, 854 men (including Generals Brown and Scott, wounded) and two guns; on that of the British, 878 men (including General Riall captured) and one gun. Each side claimed it as a victory over superior numbers. The truth is beyond question that the British had the advantage in numbers, and a still greater advantage in position; while it is equally beyond question that it was a defeat and not a victory for the Americans. They left the field and retired in perfect order to Fort Erie, while the British held the field and the next day pursued their foes.

Having received some reinforcements General Drummond, now with about 3,600 men, pushed forward to besiege Fort Erie, in which was the American army, some 2,400 strong, under General Gaines. Col. Tucker with 500 British regulars was sent across the Niagara to destroy the batteries at Black Rock, but was defeated by 300 American regulars under Major Morgan, fighting from behind a strong breastwork of felled trees, with a creek in front. On the night of the 15th of August, the British in three columns advanced to storm the American works, but after making a most determined assault were beaten off. The assailants lost 900 men, the assailed about 80. After this nothing was done till September 17th, when General Brown, who had resumed command of the American forces, determined upon and executed a sortie. Each side had received reinforcements; the Americans numbered over 3,000, the British nearly 4,000. The fighting

was severe, the Americans losing 500 men; but their opponents lost 600 men, and most of their batteries were destroyed. Each side, as usual, claimed the victory; but, exactly as Lundy's Lane must be accounted an American defeat, as our forces retreated from the ground, so this must be considered an American victory, for after it the British broke up camp and drew off to Chippeway. Nothing more was done, and on November 5th the American army recrossed the Niagara. Though marked by some brilliant feats of arms this four months' invasion of Canada, like those that had preceded it, thus came to nothing. But at the same time a British invasion of the United States was repulsed far more disgracefully. Sir George Prevost, with an army of 13,000 veteran troops, marched south along the shores of Lake Champlain to Plattsburg, which was held by General Macomb with 2,000 regulars, and perhaps double that number of nearly worthless militia;—a force that the British could have scattered to the winds, though, as they were strongly posted, not without severe loss. But the British fleet was captured by Commodore MacDonough in the fight on the lake; and then Sir George, after some heavy skirmishing between the outposts of the armies, in which the Americans had the advantage, fled precipitately back to Canada.

All through the war the sea-coasts of the United States had been harried by small predatory excursions; a part of what is now the State of Maine was conquered with little resistance, and kept until the

close of hostilities; and some of the towns on the shores of Chesapeake Bay had been plundered or burnt. In August, 1814, a more serious invasion was planned, and some 5,000 troops—regulars, sailors, and marines—were landed, under the command of General Ross. So utterly helpless was the Democratic Administration at Washington, that during the two years of warfare hardly any steps had been taken to protect the Capitol, or the country round about; what little was done was done entirely too late, and bungled badly in addition. History has not yet done justice to the ludicrous and painful folly and stupidity of which the government founded by Jefferson, and carried on by Madison, was guilty, both in its preparations for, and in its way of carrying on, this war; nor is it yet realized that the men just mentioned, and their associates, are primarily responsible for the loss we suffered in it, and the bitter humiliation some of its incidents caused us. The small British army marched at will through Virginia and Maryland, burned Washington, and finally retreated from before Baltimore and re-embarked to take part in the expedition against New Orleans. Twice, at Bladensburg and North Point, it came in contact with superior numbers of militia in fairly good position. In each case the result was the same. After some preliminary skirmishing, manoeuvring, and volley firing, the British charged with the bayonet. The rawest regiments among the American militia then broke at once; the others kept pretty steady, pouring in quite a destructive

fire, until the regulars had come up close to them, when they also fled. The British regulars were too heavily loaded to pursue, and, owing to their mode of attack, and the rapidity with which their opponents ran away, the loss of the latter was in each case very slight. At North Point, however, the militia, being more experienced, behaved better than at Bladensburg. In neither case were the British put to any trouble to win their victory.

The above is a brief sketch of the campaigns of the war. It is not cheerful reading for an American, nor yet of interest to a military student; and its lessons have been taught so often by similar occurrences in other lands under like circumstances, and moreover, teach such self-evident truths, that they scarcely need to be brought to the notice of a historian. But the crowning event of the war was the Battle of New Orleans; remarkable in its military aspect, and a source of pride to every American. It is well worth a more careful study, and to it I have devoted the last chapter of this book.

New York City, 1883.

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# NAVAL WAR OF 1812

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

Causes of the War of 1812—Conflicting views of America and Britain as regards neutral rights—Those of the former power right—Impossibility of avoiding hostilities—Declaration of war—General features of the contest—Racial identity of the contestants—The treaty of peace nominally leaves the situation unchanged—But practically settles the dispute in our favor in respect to maritime rights—The British navy and its reputation prior to 1812—Comparison with other European navies—British and American authorities consulted in the present work

THE view professed by Great Britain in 1812 respecting the rights of belligerents and neutrals was diametrically opposite to that held by the United States. "Between England and the United States of America," writes a British author, "a spirit of animosity, caused chiefly by the impressment of British seamen, or of seamen asserted to be such, from on board of American merchant vessels, had unhappily subsisted for a long time" prior to the war. "It is, we believe," he continues, "an acknowledged maxim of public law, as well that no nation but the one he belongs to can release a subject from his natural allegiance, as that, provided the jurisdiction of another independent state be not infringed, every nation has a right to enforce the services of her subjects wherever they may be found.

Nor has any neutral nation such a jurisdiction over her merchant vessels upon the high seas as to exclude a belligerent nation from the right of searching them for contraband of war or for the property or persons of her enemies. And if, in the exercise of that right, the belligerent should discover on board of the neutral vessel a subject who has withdrawn himself from his lawful allegiance, the neutral can have no fair ground for refusing to deliver him up; more especially if that subject is proved to be a deserter from the sea or land service of the former." [1]

Great Britain's doctrine was "once a subject always a subject." On the other hand, the United States maintained that any foreigner, after five years' residence within her territory, and after having complied with certain forms, became one of her citizens as completely as if he was native born. Great Britain contended that her warships possessed the right of searching all neutral vessels for the property and persons of her foes. The United States, resisting this claim, asserted that "free bottoms made free goods," and that consequently her ships when on the high seas should not be molested on any pretext whatever. Finally, Great Britain's system of impressment,[2] by which men could be forcibly seized and made to serve in her navy, no

[1] "The Naval History of Great Britain," by William James, Vol. IV, p. 324. (New edition by Captain Chamier, R. N., London, 1837.)

[2] The best idea of which can be gained by reading Marryat's novels.

matter at what cost to themselves, was repugnant to every American idea.

Such wide differences in the views of the two nations produced endless difficulties. To escape the press-gang, or for other reasons, many British seamen took service under the American flag; and if they were demanded back, it is not likely that they or their American shipmates had much hesitation in swearing either that they were not British at all, or else that they had been naturalized as Americans. Equally probable is it that the American blockade-runners were guilty of a great deal of fraud and more or less thinly veiled perjury. But the wrongs done by the Americans were insignificant compared with those they received. Any innocent merchant vessel was liable to seizure at any moment; and when overhauled by a British cruiser short of men was sure to be stripped of most of her crew. The British officers were themselves the judges as to whether a seaman should be pronounced a native of America or of Britain, and there was no appeal from their judgment. If a captain lacked his full complement there was little doubt as to the view he would take of any man's nationality. The wrongs inflicted on our seafaring countrymen by their impressment into foreign ships formed the main cause of the war.

There were still other grievances which are thus presented by the British Admiral Cochrane.[3] "Our

[3] "Autobiography of a Seaman," by Thomas, tenth Earl of Dundonald, Admiral of the Red, Rear-Admiral of the Fleet, London, 1860, vol. I, p. 24.

treatment of its (America's) citizens was scarcely in accordance with the national privileges to which the young Republic had become entitled. There were no doubt many individuals among the American people who, caring little for the Federal Government, considered it more profitable to break than to keep the laws of nations by aiding and supporting our enemy (France), and it was against such that the efforts of the squadron had chiefly been directed; but the way the object was carried out was scarcely less an infraction of those national laws which we were professedly enforcing. The practice of taking English (and American) seamen out of American ships without regard to the safety of navigating them when thus deprived of their hands has been already mentioned. To this may be added the detention of vessels against which nothing contrary to international neutrality could be established, whereby their cargoes became damaged, the compelling them, on suspicion only, to proceed to ports other than those to which they were destined; and generally treating them as though they were engaged in contraband trade. . . . American ships were not permitted to quit English ports without giving security for the discharge of their cargoes in some other British or neutral port." On the same subject James[4] writes: "When, by the maritime supremacy of England, France could no longer trade for herself, America proffered her services, as a neutral, to trade for her; and American merchants and their

[4] L. c., IV, 325.

agents, in the gains that flowed in, soon found a compensation for all the perjury and fraud necessary to cheat the former out of her belligerent rights. The high commercial importance of the United States, thus obtained, coupled with a similarity of language and, to a superficial observer, a resemblance in person between the natives of America and Great Britain, has caused the former to be the chief, if not the only, sufferers by the exercise of the right of search. Chiefly indebted for their growth and prosperity to emigration from Europe, the United States hold out every allurement to foreigners, particularly to British seamen, whom, by a process peculiarly their own, they can naturalize as quickly as a dollar can exchange masters and a blank form, ready signed and sworn to, can be filled up.[5] It is the knowledge of this fact that makes British naval officers when searching for deserters from their service so harsh in their scrutiny, and so sceptical of American oaths and asseverations."

The last sentence of the foregoing from James is a euphemistic way of saying that whenever a British commander short of men came across an American vessel he impressed all of her crew that he wanted, whether they were citizens of the United States or not. It must be remembered, however, that the only reason why Great Britain did us more injury than any other power was because she was better able to do so. None of her acts were more offensive than Napoleon's Milan decree, by which

[5] This is an exaggeration.

it was declared that any neutral vessel which permitted itself to be searched by a British cruiser should be considered as British, and as the lawful prize of any French vessel. French frigates and privateers were very apt to snap up any American vessel they came across, and were only withheld at all by the memory of the sharp dressing they had received in the West Indies during the quasi-war of 1799-1800. What we undoubtedly ought to have done was to have adopted the measure actually proposed in Congress, and declared war on both France and England. As it was, we chose as a foe the one that had done, and could still do, us the greatest injury.

The principles for which the United States contended in 1812 are now universally accepted, and those so tenaciously maintained by Great Britain find no advocates in the civilized world. That England herself was afterward completely reconciled to our views was amply shown by her intense indignation when Commodore Wilkes, in the exercise of the right of search for the persons of the foes of his country, stopped the neutral British ship *Trent;* while the applause with which the act was greeted in America proves pretty clearly another fact, that we had warred for the right, not because it *was* the right, but because it agreed with our self-interest to do so. We were contending for "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights"; meaning by the former expression, freedom to trade wherever we chose without hindrance save from the power with whom we were

trading; and by the latter, that a man who happened to be on the sea should have the same protection accorded to a man who remained on land. Nominally, neither of these questions was settled by, or even alluded to, in the treaty of peace; but the immense increase in reputation that the navy acquired during the war practically decided both points in our favor. Our sailors had gained too great a name for one to molest them with impunity again.

Holding views on these maritime subjects so radically different from each other, the two nations could not but be continually dealing with causes of quarrel. Not only did British cruisers molest our merchantmen, but at length one of them, the 50-gun ship *Leopard,* attacked an American frigate, the *Chesapeake,* when the latter was so lumbered up that she could not return a shot, killed or disabled some twenty of her men, and took away four others, one Briton and three Americans, who were claimed as deserters. For this act an apology was offered, but it failed to restore harmony between the two nations. Soon afterward another action was fought. The American frigate *President*, Commodore Rodgers, attacked the British sloop *Little Belt*, Captain Bingham, and exchanged one or two broadsides with her, —the frigate escaping scot-free while the sloop was nearly knocked to pieces. Mutual recriminations followed, each side insisting that the other was the assailant.

When Great Britain issued her Orders in Council forbidding our trading with France, we retaliated

by passing an embargo act, which prevented us from trading at all. There could be but one result to such a succession of incidents, and that was war. Accordingly, in June, 1812, war was declared; and as a contest for the rights of seamen, it was largely waged on the ocean. We also had not a little fighting to do on land, in which, as a rule, we came out second-best. Few or no preparations for the war had been made, and the result was such as might have been anticipated. After dragging on through three dreary and uneventful years it came to an end in 1815, by a peace which left matters in almost precisely the state in which the war had found them. On land and water the contest took the form of a succession of petty actions, in which the glory acquired by the victor seldom eclipsed the disgrace incurred by the vanquished. Neither side succeeded in doing what it intended. Americans declared that Canada must and should be conquered, but the conquering came quite as near being the other way. British writers insisted that the American navy should be swept from the seas; and during the sweeping process it increased fourfold.

When the United States declared war, Great Britain was straining every nerve and muscle in a death struggle with the most formidable military despotism of modern times, and was obliged to entrust the defence of her Canadian colonies to a mere handful of regulars, aided by the local fencibles. But Congress had provided even fewer trained soldiers, and relied on the militia. The latter chiefly exercised

their fighting abilities upon one another in dueling, and, as a rule, were afflicted with conscientious scruples whenever it was necessary to cross the frontier and attack the enemy. Accordingly, the campaign opened with the bloodless surrender of an American general to a much inferior British force, and the war continued much as it had begun; we suffered disgrace after disgrace, while the losses we inflicted, in turn, on Great Britain were so slight as hardly to attract her attention. At last, having crushed her greater foe, she turned to crush the lesser, and, in her turn, suffered ignominious defeat. By this time events had gradually developed a small number of soldiers on our northern frontier, who, commanded by Scott and Brown, were able to contend on equal terms with the veteran troops to whom they were opposed, though these formed part of what was then undoubtedly the most formidable fighting infantry any European nation possessed. The battles at this period of the struggle were remarkable for the skill and stubborn courage with which they were waged, as well as for the heavy loss involved; but the number of combatants was so small that in Europe they would have been regarded as mere outpost skirmishes, and they wholly failed to attract any attention abroad in that period of colossal armies.

When Great Britain seriously turned her attention to her transatlantic foe, and assembled in Canada an army of 14,000 men at the head of Lake Champlain, Congressional forethought enabled it to be opposed by soldiers who, it is true, were as well dis-

ciplined, as hardy, and as well commanded as any in the world, but who were only a few hundred strong, backed by more or less incompetent militia. Only Macdonough's skill and Sir George Prevost's incapacity saved us from a serious disaster; the sea-fight reflected high honor on our seamen, but the retreat of the British land-forces was due to the commander and not to their antagonists. Meanwhile a large British fleet in the Chesapeake had not achieved much glory by the destruction of local oyster-boats and the burning of a few farmers' houses, so an army was landed to strike a decisive blow. At Bladensburg[6] the five thousand British regulars, utterly worn out by heat and fatigue, by their mere appearance, frightened into a panic double their number of American militia well posted. But the only success attained was burning the public buildings of Washington, and that result was of dubious value. Baltimore was attacked next, and the attack repulsed, after the forts and ships had shelled one another with the slight results that usually attend that spectacular and harmless species of warfare.

The close of the contest was marked by the extraordinary battle of New Orleans. It was a perfectly useless shedding of blood, since peace had already been declared. There is hardly another contest of modern times where the defeated side suffered such frightful carnage, while the victors came off almost scathless. It is quite in accordance with

[6] See the "Capture of Washington," by Edward D. Ingraham (Philadelphia, 1849).

the rest of the war that the militia, hitherto worse than useless, should on this occasion win against great odds in point of numbers; and, moreover, that their splendid victory should have been of little consequence in its effects upon the result. On the whole, the contest by land, where we certainly ought to have been successful, reflected greater credit on our antagonists than upon us, in spite of the services of Scott, Brown, and Jackson. Our small force of regulars and volunteers did excellently; as for the militia, New Orleans proved that they *could* fight superbly; and the other battles that they generally *would not* fight at all.

At sea, as will appear, the circumstances were widely different. Here we possessed a small but highly effective force, the ships well built, manned by thoroughly trained men, and commanded by able and experienced officers. The deeds of our navy form a part of history over which any American can be pardoned for lingering.

Such was the origin, issue, and general character of the war. It may now be well to proceed to a comparison of the authorities on the subject. Allusion has already been made to them in the preface, but a fuller reference seems to be necessary in this connection.

At the close of the contest, the large majority of historians who wrote of it were so bitterly rancorous that their statements must be received with caution. For the main facts I have relied wherever

it was practicable upon the official letters of the commanding officers, taking each as authority for his own force and loss.[7] For all the British victories we have British official letters, which tally almost exactly, as regards matters of *fact* and not of *opinion,* with the corresponding American accounts. For the first year the British also published official accounts of their defeats, which, in the cases of the *Guerrière, Macedonian,* and *Frolic,* I have followed as closely as the accounts of the American victors. The last British official letter published announcing a defeat was that in the case of the *Java,* and it is the only letter that I have not strictly accepted. The fact that no more were published thereafter is of itself unfortunate; and from the various contradictions it contains it would appear to have been tampered with. The surgeon's report accompanying it is certainly false. Subsequent to 1812 no letter of a defeated British commander was published,[8] and I have to depend upon the various British historians, especially James, of whom more anon.

The American and British historians from whom we are thus at times forced to draw our material

[7] As where Broke states his own force at 330, his antagonist's at 440, and the American court of inquiry makes the numbers 396 and 379, I have taken them as being 330 and 379 respectively. This is the only just method; I take it for granted that each commander meant to tell the truth, and of course knew his own force, while he might very naturally and in perfect good faith exaggerate his antagonist's.

[8] Except about the battles on the Lakes, where I have accordingly given the same credit to the accounts both of the British and of the Americans.

regard the war from very different standpoints, and their accounts generally differ. Each writer naturally so colored the affair as to have it appear favorable to his own side. Sometimes this was done intentionally and sometimes not. Not infrequently errors are made against the historian's own side; as when the British author, Brenton, says that the British brig *Peacock* mounted 32's instead of 24's, while Lossing in his "Field Book of the War of 1812" makes the same mistake about the armament of the American brig *Argus*. Errors of this description are, of course, as carefully to be guarded against as any others. Mere hearsay reports, such as "it has been said," "a prisoner on board the opposing fleet has observed," "an American (or British) newspaper of such and such a date has remarked," are of course to be rejected. There is a curious parallelism in the errors on both sides. For example, the American, Mr. Low, writing in 1813, tells how the *Constitution*, 44, captured the *Guerrière* of 49 guns, while the British Lieutenant Low, writing in 1880, tells how the *Pelican*, 18, captured the *Argus* of 20 guns. Each records the truth but not the whole truth, for although rating 44 and 18 the victors carried respectively 54 and 21 guns, of heavier metal than those of their antagonists. Such errors are generally intentional. Similarly, most American writers mention the actions in which the privateers were victorious, but do not mention those in which they were defeated; while the British, in turn, record every successful "cutting-out" expedition, but ig-

more entirely those which terminated unfavorably. Other errors arise from honest ignorance. Thus, James in speaking of the repulse of the *Endymion's* boats by the *Neufchatel* gives the latter a crew of 120 men; she had more than this number originally, but only 40 were in her at the time of the attack. So also when the captain of the *Pelican* writes that the officers of the *Argus* report her loss at 40, when they really reported it at 24; or when Captain Dacres thought the *Constitution* had lost about 20 men instead of 14. The American gunboat captains in recounting their engagements with the British frigates invariably greatly overestimated the loss of the latter. So that on both sides there were some intentional misstatements or garblings, and a much more numerous class of simple blunders, arising largely from an incapacity for seeing more than one side of the question.

Among the early British writers upon this war, the ablest was James. He devoted one work, his "Naval Occurrences," entirely to it; and it occupies the largest part of the sixth volume of his more extensive "History of the British Navy." [9] Two other British writers, Lieutenant Marshall[10] and Captain Brenton,[11] wrote histories of the same events, about the same time; but neither of these naval officers produced half as valuable a work as did the civilian

[9] A new edition, London, 1826.

[10] "Royal Naval Biography," by John Marshall (London, 1823-1835).

[11] "Naval History of Great Britain," by Edward Pelham Brenton (new edition, London, 1837).

James. Marshall wrote a dozen volumes, each filled with several scores of dreary panegyrics, or memoirs of as many different officers. There is no attempt at order, hardly anything about the ships, guns, or composition of the crews; and not even the pretence of giving both sides, the object being to make every Englishman appear in his best light. The work is analogous to the numerous lives of Decatur, Bainbridge, Porter, etc., that appeared in the United States about the same time, and is quite as untrustworthy. Brenton made a far better and very interesting book, written on a good and well-connected plan, and apparently with a sincere desire to tell the truth. He accepts the British official accounts as needing nothing whatever to supplement them, precisely as Cooper accepts the American officials'. A more serious fault is his inability to be accurate. That this inaccuracy is not intentional is proved by the fact that it tells as often against his own side as against his opponents. He says, for example, that the guns of Perry's and Barclay's squadrons "were about equal in number and weight," that the *Peacock* (British) was armed with 32's instead of 24's, and underestimates the force of the second *Wasp*. But the blunders are quite as bad when distributed as when confined to one side; in addition, Brenton's disregard of all details makes him of but little use.

James, as already said, is by far the most valuable authority on the war, as regards *purely British* affairs. He enters minutely into details, and has evi-

dently laboriously hunted up his authorities. He has examined the ships' logs, the Admiralty reports, various treaties, all the "Gazette" reports, gives very well-chosen extracts, has arranged his work in chronological order, discriminates between the officers that deserve praise and those that deserve blame, and in fact writes a work which ought to be consulted by every student of naval affairs. But he is unfortunately afflicted with a hatred toward the Americans that amounts to a monomania. He wishes to make out as strong a case as possible against them. The *animus* of his work may be gathered from the not over complimentary account of the education of the youthful seafaring American, which can be found in Vol. VI, p. 113, of his "History." On page 153 he asserts that he is an "impartial Historian"; and about three lines before mentions that "it may suit the Americans to invent any falsehood, no matter how barefaced, to foist a valiant character on themselves." On page 419 he says that Captain Porter is to be believed, "so far as is borne out by proof (the only safe way where an American is concerned),"—which somewhat sweeping denunciation of the veracity of all of Captain Porter's compatriots would seem to indicate that James was not, perhaps, in that dispassionate frame of mind best suited for writing history. That he should be biased against individual captains can be understood, but when he makes rabid onslaughts upon the American people as a whole, he renders it difficult for an American, at any rate, to put implicit credence in him. His

statements are all the harder to confute when they are erroneous, because they are intentionally so. It is not, as with Brenton and Marshall, because he really thinks a British captain *can not* be beaten, except by some kind of distorted special Providence, for no man says worse things than he does about certain officers and crews. A writer of James' undoubted ability must have known perfectly well that his statements were untrue in many instances, as where he garbles Hilyar's account of Porter's loss, or misstates the comparative force of the fleets on Lake Champlain.

When he says (p. 194) that Captain Bainbridge wished to run away from the *Java*, and would have done so if he had not been withheld by the advice of his first lieutenant, who was a renegade Englishman,[12] it is not of much consequence whether his making the statement was due to excessive credulity or petty meanness, for, in either case, whether the defect was in his mind or his morals, it is enough to greatly impair the value of his other "facts." Again, when James (p. 165) states that Decatur ran away from the *Macedonian* until, by some marvelous optical delusion, he mistook her for a 32, he merely detracts a good deal from the worth of his own account. When the Americans adopt boarding helmets, he considers it as proving conclusively that they are suffering from an acute attack of cowardice. On p. 122 he says that "had the *President*, when she

[12] Who, by the way, was Mr. Parker, born in Virginia, and never in England in his life.

fell in with the *Belvidera,* been cruising alone . . . Commodore Rodgers would have magnified the British frigate into a line-of-battle ship, and have done his utmost to avoid her," which gives an excellent idea of the weight to be attached to the various other anecdotes he relates of the much abused Commodore Rodgers.

But it must always be remembered that untrustworthy as James is in anything referring purely to the Americans, he is no worse than his compeers of both nationalities. The misstatements of Niles in his "Weekly Register" about the British are quite as flagrant, and his information about his own side even more valuable.[13] Every little American author crowed over Perry's "Nelsonic victory over a greatly superior force." The *Constitution* was declared to have been at a disadvantage when she fought the *Guerrière,* and so on *ad infinitum.* But these writers have all faded into oblivion, and their writings are not even referred to, much less believed. James, on the contrary, has passed through edition after edition, is considered as unquestionable authority in

[13] In Niles, by the way, can be found excellent examples of the traditional American "spread-eagle" style. In one place I remember his describing "The Immortal Rodgers," balked of his natural prey, the British, as "soaring about like the bold bald eagle of his native land," seeking whom he might devour. The accounts he gives of British line-of-battle ships fleeing from American 44's quite match James' anecdotes of the latter's avoidance of British 38's and 36's for fear they might mount twenty-four-pounders. The two works taken together give a very good idea of the war; separately, either is utterly unreliable, especially in matters of opinion.

his own country and largely throughout Europe, and has furnished the basis for every subsequent account by British authors. From Alison to Lieutenant Low, almost every English work, whether of a popular character or not, is, in so far as it touches on the war, simply a "rehash" of the works written by James. The consequence is that the British and American accounts have astonishingly little resemblance. One ascribes the capture of the British frigates simply to the fact that their opponents were "cut down line-of-battle ships"; the other gives all the glory to the "undaunted heroism," etc., of the Yankee sailors.

One not very creditable trait of the early American naval historians gave their rivals a great advantage. The object of the former was to make out that the *Constitution*, for example, won her victories against an equal foe, and an exact statement of the forces showed the contrary; so they always avoided figures, and thus left the ground clear for James' careful misstatements. Even when they criticised him they never went into details, confining themselves to some remark about "hurling" his figures in his face with "loathing." Even Cooper, interesting though his work is, has gone far less into figures than he should, and seems to have paid little if any attention to the British official statements, which of course should be received as of equal weight with the American. His comments on the actions are generally very fair, the book never being disfigured by bitterness toward the British; but he is

certainly wrong, for example, in ascribing the loss of the *Chesapeake* solely to accident, that of the *Argus* solely to her inferiority in force, and so on. His disposition to praise *all* the American commanders may be generous, but is nevertheless unjust. If Decatur's surrender of the *President* is at least impliedly praised, then Porter's defence of the *Essex* can hardly receive its just award. There is no weight in the commendation bestowed upon Hull, if commendation, the same in kind though less in degree, is bestowed upon Rodgers. It is a great pity that Cooper did not write a criticism on James, for no one could have done it more thoroughly. But he never mentions him, except once in speaking of Barclay's fleet. In all probability this silence arose from sheer contempt, and the certainty that most of James' remarks were false; but the effect was that very many foreigners believe him to have shirked the subject. He rarely gives any data by which the statements of James can be disproved, and it is for this reason that I have been obliged to criticise the latter's work very fully. Many of James' remarks, however, defy criticism from their random nature, as when he states that American midshipmen were chiefly masters and mates of merchantmen, and does not give a single proof to support the assertion. It would be nearly as true to assert that the British midshipmen were for the most part ex-members of the prize-ring, and as much labor would be needed to disprove it. In other instances it is quite enough to let his words speak for themselves, as where he

says (p. 155) that of the American sailors one-third in number and one-half in point of effectiveness were in reality British. That is, of the 450 men the *Constitution* had when she fought the *Java* 150 were British, and the remaining 300 could have been as effectively replaced by 150 more British. So a very little logic works out a result that James certainly did not intend to arrive at; namely, that 300 British led by American officers could beat, with ease and comparative impunity, 400 British led by their own officers. He also forgets that the whole consists of the sum of the parts. He accounts for the victories of the Americans by stating (p. 280) that they were lucky enough to meet with frigates and brigs who had unskilful gunners or worthless crews; he also carefully shows that the *Macedonian* was incompetently handled, the *Peacock* commanded by a mere martinet, the *Avon's* crew unpracticed at the guns, the *Epervier's* mutinous and cowardly, the *Penguin's* weak and unskilful, the *Java's* exceedingly poor, and more to the same effect. Now the Americans took in single fight three frigates and seven sloops, and when as many as ten vessels are met it is exceedingly probable that they represent the fair average; so that James' strictures, so far as true, simply show that the average British ship was very apt to possess, comparatively speaking, an incompetent captain or unskilful crew. These disadvantages were not felt when opposed to navies in which they existed to an even greater extent, but became very apparent when brought into contact with a power

whose few officers knew how to play their own parts very nearly to perfection, and, something equally important, knew how to make first-rate crews out of what was already good raw material. Finally, a large proportion of James' abuse of the Americans sufficiently refutes itself, and perhaps Cooper's method of contemptuously disregarding him was the best; but no harm can follow from devoting a little space to commenting upon him.

Much the best American work is Lieutenant George E. Emmons' statistical "History of the United States Navy." Unfortunately it is merely a mass of excellently arranged and classified statistics, and while of invaluable importance to the student, is not interesting to the average reader. Almost all the statements I have made of the force, tonnage, and armament of the American vessels, though I have whenever practicable taken them from the Naval Records, etc., yet could be just as well quoted from Emmons. Copies of most of the American official letters which I have quoted can be found in Niles' "Register," volumes 1 to 10, and all of the British ones in the "London Naval Chronicle" for the same years. It is to these two authorities that I am most indebted, and nearly as much so to the "American State Papers," Vol. XIV. Next in order come Emmons, Cooper, and the invaluable, albeit somewhat scurrilous, James; and a great many others whose names I have quoted in their proper places. In commenting upon the actions I have, whenever possible, drawn from some standard work,

such as Jurien de la Gravière's "Guerres Maritimes," Lord Howard Douglas' "Naval Gunnery," or, better still, from the lives and memoirs of Admirals Farragut, Codrington, Broke, or Durham. The titles of the various works will be found given in full as they are referred to.[14] In a few cases, where extreme accuracy was necessary, or where, as in the case of the *President's* capture, it was desirable that there should be no room for dispute as to the facts, I have given the authority for each sentence; but in general this would be too cumbersome, and so I have confined myself to referring, at or near the beginning of the account of each action, to the authorities from whom I have taken it. For the less important facts on which every one is agreed I have often given no references.

[14] To get an idea of the American seamen of that time Cooper's novels, "Miles Wallingford," "Home as Found," and the "Pilot," are far better than any history; in the "Two Admirals" the description of the fleet manœuvring is unrivaled. His view of Jack's life is rather rose-colored however. "Tom Cringle's Log" ought to be read for the information it gives; Marryat's novels will show some of the darker aspects of sailor life.

## CHAPTER II

Overwhelming naval supremacy of England when America declared war against her—Race identity of the combatants—The American navy at the beginning of the war—Officers well trained—Causes tending to make our seamen especially efficient—Close similarity between the British and American sailors—Our ships manned chiefly by native Americans, many of whom had formerly been impressed into the British navy—Quotas of seamen contributed by the different States—Navy yards—Lists of officers and men—List of vessels—Tonnage—Different ways of estimating it in Britain and America—Ratings—American ships properly rated—Armaments of the frigates and corvettes—Three styles of guns used—Difference between long guns and carronades—Short weight of American shot—Comparison of British frigates rating 38, and American frigates rating 44 guns—Compared with a 74

DURING the early years of this century England's naval power stood at a height never reached before or since by that of any other nation. On every sea her navies rode, not only triumphant, but with none to dispute their sway. The island folk had long claimed the mastery of the ocean, and they had certainly succeeded in making their claim completely good during the time of bloody warfare that followed the breaking out of the French Revolution. Since the year 1792 each European nation, in turn, had learned to feel bitter dread of the weight of England's hand. In the Baltic, Sir Samuel Hood

had taught the Russians that they must needs keep in port when the English cruisers were in the offing. The descendants of the Vikings had seen their whole navy destroyed at Copenhagen. No Dutch fleet ever put out after the day when, off Camperdown, Lord Duncan took possession of Van Winter's shattered ships. But a few years before 1812, the greatest sea-fighter of all time had died in Trafalgar Bay, and in dying had crumbled to pieces the navies of France and of Spain.

From that day England's task was but to keep in port such of her foes' vessels as she had not destroyed. France alone still possessed fleets that could be rendered formidable, and so, from the Scheldt to Toulon, her harbors were watched and her coasts harried by the blockading squadrons of the English. Elsewhere the latter had no fear of their power being seriously assailed; but their vast commerce and numerous colonies needed ceaseless protection. Accordingly in every sea their cruisers could be found, of all sizes, from the stately ship-of-the-line, with her tiers of heavy cannon and her many hundreds of men, down to the little cutter carrying but a score of souls and a couple of light guns. All these cruisers, but especially those of the lesser rates, were continually brought into contact with such of the hostile vessels as had run through the blockade, or were too small to be affected by it. French and Italian frigates were often fought and captured when they were skirting their own coasts, or had started off on a plundering cruise through the

Atlantic, or to the Indian Ocean; and though the Danes had lost their larger ships they kept up a spirited warfare with brigs and gunboats. So the English marine was in constant exercise, attended with almost invariable success.

Such was Great Britain's naval power when the Congress of the United States declared war upon her. While she could number her thousand sail, the American navy included but half a dozen frigates, and six or eight sloops and brigs; and it is small matter for surprise that the British officers should have regarded their new foe with contemptuous indifference. Hitherto the American seamen had never been heard of except in connection with two or three engagements with French frigates, and some obscure skirmishes against the Moors of Tripoli; none of which could possibly attract attention in the years that saw Aboukir, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar. And yet these same petty wars were the school which raised our marines to the highest standard of excellence. A continuous course of victory, won mainly by seamanship, had made the English sailor overweeningly self-confident, and caused him to pay but little regard to manœuvring or even to gunnery. Meanwhile the American learned, by receiving hard knocks, how to give them, and belonged to a service too young to feel an over-confidence in itself. One side had let its training relax, while the other had carried it to the highest possible point. Hence our ships proved, on the whole, victorious in the apparently unequal struggle, and the

men who had conquered the best seamen of Europe were now in turn obliged to succumb. Compared with the great naval battles of the preceding few years, our bloodiest conflicts were mere skirmishes, but they were skirmishes between the hitherto acknowledged kings of the ocean, and new men who yet proved to be more than their equals. For over a hundred years, or since the time when they had contended on equal terms with the great Dutch admirals, the British had shown a decided superiority to their various foes, and during the latter quarter of the time this superiority, as already said, was very marked indeed; in consequence, the victories of the new enemy attracted an amount of attention altogether disproportionate to their material effects. And it is a curious fact that our little navy, in which the art of handling and fighting the old broadside, sailing frigate in single conflict was brought to the highest point of perfection ever reached, that this same navy should have contained the first representative of the modern war steamer, and also the torpedo—the two terrible engines which were to drive from the ocean the very white-winged craft that had first won honor for the starry flag. The tactical skill of Hull or Decatur is now of merely archaic interest, and has but little more bearing on the manœuvring of a modern fleet than have the tactics of the Athenian galleys. But the war still conveys some most practical lessons as to the value of efficient ships and, above all, of efficient men in them. Had we only possessed the miserable gun-

boats, our men could have done nothing; had we not possessed good men, the heavy frigates would have availed us little. Poor ships and impotent artillery had lost the Dutch almost their entire navy; fine ships and heavy cannon had not saved the French and Spanish from the like fate. We owed our success to putting sailors even better than the Dutch on ships even finer than those built by the two Latin seaboard powers.

The first point to be remembered in order to write a fair account of this war is that the difference in fighting skill, which certainly existed between the two parties, was due mainly to training, and not to the nature of the men. It seems certain that the American had in the beginning somewhat the advantage, because his surroundings, partly physical and partly social and political, had forced him into habits of greater self-reliance. Therefore, on the average, he offered rather the best material to start with; but the difference was very slight, and totally disappeared under good training. The combatants were men of the same race, differing but little from one another. On the New England coast the English blood was as pure as in any part of Britain; in New York and New Jersey it was mixed with that of the Dutch settlers—and the Dutch are by race nearer to the true old English of Alfred and Harold than are, for example, the thoroughly Anglicized Welsh of Cornwall. Otherwise, the infusion of new blood into the English race on this side of the Atlantic has been chiefly from three sources—Ger-

man, Irish, and Norse; and these three sources represent the elemental parts of the composite English stock in about the same proportions in which they were originally combined—mainly Teutonic, largely Celtic, and with a Scandinavian admixture. The descendant of the German becomes as much an Anglo-American as the descendant of the Strathclyde Celt has already become an Anglo-Briton. Looking through names of the combatants it would be difficult to find any of one navy that could not be matched in the other—Hull or Lawrence, Allen, Perry, or Stewart. And among all the English names on both sides will be found many Scotch, Irish, or Welsh—Macdonough, O'Brien, or Jones. Still stranger ones appear: the Huguenot Tattnall is one among the American defenders of the *Constellation*, and another Huguenot Tattnall is among the British assailants at Lake Borgne. It must always be kept in mind that the Americans and the British are two substantially similar branches of the great English race, which both before and after their separation have assimilated, and made Englishmen of many other peoples.[1] The lessons taught by the war can hardly be learned unless this identity is kept in mind.[2]

[1] The inhabitants of Great Britain are best designated as "British"—English being either too narrow or too broad a term, in one case meaning the inhabitants of but a part of Britain, and in the other the whole Anglo-Saxon people.

[2] It was practically a civil war, and was waged with much harshness and bitterness on both sides. I have already spoken of the numerous grievances of the Americans; the British, in turn, looked upon our blockade-runners which entered

To understand aright the efficiency of our navy, it is necessary to take a brief look at the character and antecedents of the officers and men who served in it.

When war broke out the United States Navy was but a few years old, yet it already had a far from dishonorable history. The captains and lieutenants of 1812 had been taught their duties in a very practical school, and the flag under which they fought was endeared to them already by not a few glorious traditions—though these, perhaps, like others of their kind, had lost none of their glory in the telling. A few of the older men had served in the war of the Revolution, and all still kept fresh in mind the doughty deeds of the old-time privateering war craft. Men still talked of Biddle's daring cruises and Barney's stubborn fights, or told of Scotch Paul and the grim work they had who followed his fortunes. Besides these memories of an older generation, most of the officers had themselves taken part, when younger in years and rank, in deeds not a whit less glorious. Almost every man had had a share in some gallant feat, to which he, in part at least, owed

the French ports exactly as we regarded, at a later date, the British steamers that ran into Wilmington and Charleston. It is curious to see how illogical writers are. The careers of the *Argus* and *Alabama*, for example, were strikingly similar in many ways, yet the same writer who speaks of one as a "heroic little brig," will call the other a "black pirate." Of course there can be no possible comparison as to the *causes* for which the two vessels were fighting; but the cruises themselves were very much alike, both in character and history.

his present position. The captain had perhaps been a midshipman under Truxton when he took the *Vengeance,* and had been sent aboard the captured French frigate with the prize-master; the lieutenant had borne a part in the various attacks on Tripoli, and had led his men in the desperate hand-to-hand fights in which the Yankee cutlass proved an overmatch for the Turkish and Moorish cimeters. Nearly every senior officer had extricated himself by his own prowess or skill from the dangers of battle or storm; he owed his rank to the fact that he had proved worthy of it. Thrown upon his own resources, he had learned self-reliance; he was a first-rate practical seaman, and prided himself on the way his vessel was handled. Having reached his rank by hard work, and knowing what real fighting meant, he was careful to see that his men were trained in the *essentials* of discipline, and that they knew how to handle the guns in battle as well as polish them in peace. Beyond almost any of his countrymen, he worshiped the "Gridiron Flag," and, having been brought up in the Navy, regarded its honor as his own. It was, perhaps, the Navy alone that thought itself a match, ship against ship, for Great Britain. The remainder of the nation pinned its faith to the army, or rather to that weakest of weak reeds, the militia. The officers of the Navy, with their strong *esprit de corps,* their jealousy of their own name and record, and the knowledge, by actual experience, that the British ships sailed no faster and were no better handled than their own,

had no desire to shirk a conflict with any foe, and having tried their bravery in actual service, they made it doubly formidable by cool, wary skill. Even the younger men, who had never been in action, had been so well trained by the tried veterans over them that the lack of experience was not sensibly felt.

The sailors comprising the crews of our ships were well worthy of their leaders. There was no better seaman in the world than the American Jack; he had been bred to his work from infancy, and had been off in a fishing dory almost as soon as he could walk. When he grew older, he shipped on a merchantman or whaler, and in those warlike times, when our large merchant-marine was compelled to rely pretty much on itself for protection, each craft *had* to be well handled; all who were not were soon weeded out by a process of natural selection, of which the agents were French picaroons, Spanish buccaneers, and Malay pirates. It was a rough school, but it taught Jack to be both skilful and self-reliant; and he was all the better fitted to become a man-of-war's man, because he knew more about fire-arms than most of his kind in foreign lands. At home he had used his ponderous ducking gun with good effect on the flocks of canvasbacks in the reedy flats of the Chesapeake, or among the sea-coots in the rough water off the New England cliffs; and when he went on a sailing voyage the chances were even that there would be some use for the long guns before he returned, for the American merchant sailor could trust to no armed escort.

The wonderful effectiveness of our seamen at the date of which I am writing as well as long subsequently to it was largely due to the curious condition of things in Europe. For thirty years all the European nations had been in a state of continuous and very complicated warfare, during the course of which each nation in turn fought almost every other, England being usually at loggerheads with all. One effect of this was to force an enormous proportion of the carrying trade of the world into American bottoms. The old Massachusetts town of Salem was then one of the main depots of the East India trade; the Baltimore clippers carried goods into the French and German ports with small regard to the blockade; New Bedford and Sag Harbor fitted out whalers for the Arctic seas as well as for the South Pacific; the rich merchants of Philadelphia and New York sent their ships to all parts of the world; and every small port had some craft in the coasting trade. On the New England seaboard but few of the boys would reach manhood without having made at least one voyage to the Newfoundland Banks after codfish; and in the whaling towns of Long Island it used to be an old saying that no man could marry till he struck his whale. The wealthy merchants of the large cities would often send their sons on a voyage or two before they let them enter their counting-houses. Thus it came about that a large portion of our population was engaged in seafaring pursuits of a nature strongly tending to develop a resolute and hardy character in the men

that followed them. The British merchantmen sailed in huge convoys, guarded by men-of-war, while, as said before, our vessels went alone, and relied for protection on themselves. If a fishing smack went to the Banks it knew that it ran a chance of falling in with some not overscrupulous Nova Scotian privateer. The barks that sailed from Salem to the Spice Islands kept their men well trained both at great guns and musketry, so as to be able to beat off either Malay proas, or Chinese junks. The New York ships, loaded for the West Indies, were prepared to do battle with the picaroons that swarmed in the Spanish Main; while the fast craft from Baltimore could fight as well as they could run. Wherever an American seaman went, he not only had to contend with all the legitimate perils of the sea, but he had also to regard almost every stranger as a foe. Whether this foe called himself pirate or privateer mattered but little. French, Spaniards, Algerines, Malays, from all alike our commerce suffered, and against all our merchants were forced to defend themselves. The effect of such a state of things, which made commerce so remunerative that the bolder spirits could hardly keep out of it, and so hazardous that only the most skilful and daring could succeed in it, was to raise up as fine a set of seamen as ever manned a navy. The stern school in which the American was brought up forced him into habits of independent thought and action which it was impossible that the more protected Briton could possess. He worked more

intelligently and less from routine, and while perfectly obedient and amenable to discipline, was yet able to judge for himself in an emergency. He was more easily managed than most of his kind—being shrewd, quiet, and, in fact, comparatively speaking, rather moral than otherwise; if he was a New Englander, when he retired from a sea life he was not unapt to end his days as a deacon. Altogether there could not have been better material for a fighting crew than cool, gritty American Jack. Moreover, there was a good nucleus of veterans to begin with, who were well fitted to fill the more responsible positions, such as captains of guns, etc. These were men who had cruised in the little *Enterprise* after French privateers, who had been in the *Constellation* in her two victorious fights, or who, perhaps, had followed Decatur when with only eighty men he cut out the *Philadelphia*, manned by fivefold his force and surrounded by hostile batteries and war vessels,—one of the boldest expeditions of the kind on record.

It is to be noted, furthermore, in this connection, that by a singular turn of fortune, Great Britain, whose system of impressing American sailors had been one of the chief causes of the war, herself became, in consequence of that very system, in some sort a nursery for the seamen of the young Republican navy. The American sailor feared nothing more than being impressed on a British ship—dreading beyond measure the hard life and cruel discipline aboard of her; but once there, he usually did well

enough, and in course of time often rose to be of some little consequence. For years before 1812, the number of these impressed sailors was in reality greater than the entire number serving in the American navy, from which it will readily be seen that they formed a good stock to draw upon. Very much to their credit, they never lost their devotion to the home of their birth, more than two thousand of them being imprisoned at the beginning of the war because they refused to serve against their country. When Commodore Decatur captured the *Macedonian*, that officer, as we learn from Marshall's "Naval Biography" (II, 1019), stated that most of the seamen of his own frigate, the *United States*, had served in British war vessels, and that some had been with Lord Nelson in the *Victory*, and had even been bargemen to the great Admiral, —a pretty sure proof that the American sailors did not show at a disadvantage when compared with others.[3]

[3] With perfect gravity, James and his followers assume Decatur's statement to be equivalent to saying that he had chiefly British seamen on board; whereas even as quoted by Marshall, Decatur merely said that "his seamen had served on board a British man-of-war," and that some "had served under Lord Nelson." Like the *Constitution*, the *United States* had rid herself of most of the British subjects on board, before sailing. Decatur's remark simply referred to the number of his American seamen who had been impressed on board British ships. Whenever James says that an American ship had a large proportion of British sailors aboard, the explanation is that a large number of the crew were Americans who had been impressed on British ships. It would be no more absurd to claim Trafalgar as an Ameri-

Good seaman as the impressed American proved to be, yet he seldom missed an opportunity to escape from the British service, by desertion or otherwise. In the first place, the life was very hard, and, in the second, the American seaman was very patriotic. He had an honest and deep affection for his own flag, while, on the contrary, he felt a curiously strong hatred for England, as distinguished from Englishmen. This hatred was partly an abstract feeling, cherished through a vague traditional respect for Bunker Hill, and partly something very real and vivid, owing to the injuries he, and others like him, had received. Whether he lived in Maryland or Massachusetts, he certainly knew men whose ships had been seized by British cruisers, their goods confiscated, and the vessels condemned. Some of his friends had fallen victims to the odious right of search, and had never been heard of afterward. He had suffered many an injury to friend, fortune, or person, and some day he hoped to repay them all; and when the war did come, he fought all the better because he knew it was his own quarrel. But, as I have said, this hatred was against England, not against Englishmen. Then, as now, sailors were scattered about over the world without any great regard for nationality; and the resulting intermingling of natives and foreigners in every mercantile marine was especially great in those of

can victory because there was a certain number of Americans in Nelson's fleet, than it is to assert that the Americans were victorious in 1812, because there were a few renegade British on board their ships.

Britain and America, whose people spoke the same tongue and wore the same aspect. When chance drifted the American into Liverpool or London, he was ready enough to ship in an Indiaman or whaler, caring little for the fact that he served under the British flag; and the Briton, in turn, who found himself in New York or Philadelphia, willingly sailed in one of the clipper-built barks, whether it floated the Stars and Stripes or not. When Captain Porter wrought such havoc among the British whalers in the South Seas, he found that no inconsiderable portion of their crews consisted of Americans, some of whom enlisted on board his own vessel; and among the crews of the American whalers were many British. In fact, though the skipper of each ship might brag loudly of his nationality, yet in practical life he knew well enough that there was very little to choose between a Yankee and a Briton.[4] Both were bold and hardy, cool and in-

[4] What choice there was, was in favor of the American. In point of courage there was no difference whatever. The *Essex* and the *Lawrence*, as well as the *Frolic* and the *Reindeer*, were defended with the same stubborn, desperate, cool bravery that marks the English race on both sides of the Atlantic. But the American was a free citizen, any one's equal, a voter with a personal interest in his country's welfare, and, above all, without having perpetually before his eyes the degrading fear of the press-gang. In consequence, he was more tractable than the Englishman, more self-reliant, and possessed greater judgment. In the fight between the *Wasp* and the *Frolic*, the latter's crew had apparently been well trained at the guns, for they aimed well; but they fired at the wrong time, and never corrected the error; while their antagonists, delivering their broadsides far more slowly, by

telligent, quick with their hands, and showing at their best in an emergency. They looked alike and spoke alike; when they took the trouble to think, they thought alike; and when they got drunk, which was not an unfrequent occurrence, they quarreled alike.

Mingled with them were a few seamen of other nationalities. The Irishman, if he came from the old Dano-Irish towns of Waterford, Dublin, and Wexford, or from the Ulster coast, was very much like the two chief combatants; the Celto-Turanian kern of the west did not often appear on shipboard. The French, Danes, and Dutch were hemmed in at home; they had enough to do on their own seaboard, and could not send men into foreign fleets. A few Norse, however, did come in, and excellent sailors and fighters they made. With the Portuguese and Italians, of whom some were to be found serving under the Union Jack and others under the Stars and Stripes, it was different; although there were many excellent exceptions they did not, as a rule, make the best kind of seamen. They were treacherous, fond of the knife, less ready with their hands, and likely to lose either their wits or their courage when in a tight place.

intelligently waiting until the proper moment, worked frightful havoc. But though there was a certain slight difference between the seamen of the two nations, it must never be forgotten that it was very much less than that between the various individuals of the same nation; and when the British had been trained for a few years by such commanders as Broke and Manners, it was impossible to surpass them, and it needed our best men to equal them.

In the American navy, unlike the British, there was no impressment; the sailor was a volunteer, and he shipped in whatever craft his fancy selected. Throughout the war there were no "picked crews" on the American side,[5] excepting on the last two cruises of the *Constitution*. In fact (as seen by the letter of Captains Stewart and Bainbridge to Secretary Hamilton), there was often much difficulty in getting enough men.[6] Many sailors preferred to serve in the innumerable privateers, and the two

[5] James' statements to the contrary being in every case utterly without foundation. He is also wrong in his assertion that the American ships had no boys; they had nearly as many in proportion as the British. The *Constitution* had 31, the *Adams* 15, etc. So, when he states that our midshipmen were generally masters and mates of merchantmen; they were generally from eleven to seventeen years old at the beginning of the war, and, besides, had rarely or never been in the merchant marine.

[6] Reading through the volumes of official letters about this war, which are preserved in the office of the Secretary of the Navy, one of the most noticeable things is the continual complaints about the difficulty of getting men. The *Adams* at one time had a crew of but nineteen men—"fourteen of whom are marines," adds the aggrieved commander. A log-book of one of the gun-boats records the fact that after much difficulty *two* men were enlisted—from the jail, with a parenthetical memorandum to the effect that they were both very drunk. British ships were much more easily manned, as they could always have recourse to impressment.

The *Constitution* on starting out on her last cruises had an extraordinary number of able seamen aboard, viz., 218, with but 92 ordinary seamen, 12 boys, and 44 marines, making, with the officers, a total of 440 men. (See letter of Captain Bainbridge, Oct. 16, 1814; it is letter No. 51, in the fortieth volume of "Captains' Letters," in the clerk's office of the Secretary of the Navy.)

above-mentioned officers, in urging the necessity of building line-of-battle ships, state that it was hard work to recruit men for vessels of an inferior grade, so long as the enemy had ships of the line.

One of the standard statements made by the British historians about this war is that our ships were mainly or largely manned by British sailors. This, if true, would not interfere with the lessons which it teaches; and, besides that, it is *not* true.

In this, as in everything else, all the modern writers have merely followed James or Brenton, and I shall accordingly confine myself to examining their assertions. The former begins (Vol. IV, p. 470) by diffidently stating that there is a "similarity" of language between the inhabitants of the two countries—an interesting philological discovery that but few will attempt to controvert. In Vol. VI, p. 154, he mentions that a number of blanks occur in the American Navy List in the column "Where Born"; and in proof of the fact that these blanks are there because the men were not Americans, he says that their names "are all English and Irish."[7] They certainly are; and so are all the other

[7] For example, James writes: "Out of the 32 captains one only, Thomas Tingey, has England marked as his birthplace. . . . Three blanks occur, and we consider it rather creditable to Captains John Shaw, Daniel S. Patterson, and John Ord Creighton that they were ashamed to tell where they were born." I have not been able to find out the latter's birth-place, but Captain Shaw was born in New York, and I have seen Captain Patterson incidentally alluded to as "born and bred in America." Generally, whenever I have been able to fill up the vacancies in the column "Where Born," I have found that it was in America. From these

names in the list. It could not well be otherwise, as the United States navy was not officered by Indians. In looking over this same Navy List (of 1816) it will be seen that but a little over five per cent of the officers were born abroad—a smaller proportion by far than would exist in the population of the country at large—and most of these had come to America when under ten years of age. On p. 155 James adds that the British sailors composed "one third in number and one half in point of effectiveness" of the American crews. Brenton in his "Naval History" writes: "It was said, and I have no reason to doubt the fact, that there were 200 British seamen aboard the *Constitution*."[8] These statements are mere assertions unsupported by proof and of such a loose character as to be difficult to refute. As our navy was small, it may be best to take each ship in turn. The only ones of which the British could write authoritatively were, of course, those which they captured. The first one taken was the *Wasp*. James says many British were discovered among her crew, instancing especially one sailor named Jack Lang; now Jack Lang was born in the town of Brunswick, New Jersey, *but had been impressed and forced to serve in the British Navy*. The same was doubtless true of the rest of the "many British" seamen of her crew; at any rate, as the only instance James men-

facts it would appear that James was somewhat hasty in concluding that the omission of the birth-place proved the owner of the name to be a native of Great Britain.

[8] New edition, London, 1837, Vol. II, p. 456.

tions (Jack Lang) was an American, he can hardly be trusted for those whom he does not name.

Of the 95 men composing the crew of the *Nautilus* when she was captured, "6 were detained and sent to England to await examination as being suspected of being British subjects."[9] Of the other small brigs, the *Viper, Vixen, Rattlesnake*, and *Syren*, James does not mention the composition of the crews, and I do not know that any were claimed as British. Of the crew of the *Argus* "about 10 or 12 were believed to be British subjects; the American officers swore the crew contained none" (James, "Naval Occurrences," p. 278). From 0 to 10 per cent can be allowed. When the *Frolic* was captured "her crew consisted of native Americans" (*do.* p. 340). James speaks ("History," p. 418) of "a portion of the British subjects on board the *Essex*," but without giving a word of proof or stating his grounds of belief. One man was claimed as a deserter by the British, but he turned out to be a New Yorker. There were certainly a certain number of British aboard, but the number probably did not exceed thirty. Of the *President's* crew he says

[9] Quoted from letter of Commodore Rodgers of September 12, 1812 (in Naval Archives, "Captains' Letters," Vol. XXV, No. 43), inclosing a "List of American prisoners of war discharged out of custody of Lieutenant William Miller, agent at the port of Halifax," in exchange for some of the British captured by Porter. This list, by the way, shows the crew of the *Nautilus* (counting the six men detained as British) to have been 95 in number, instead of 106, as stated by James. Commodore Rodgers adds that he has detained 12 men of the *Guerrière's* crew as an offset to the 6 men belonging to the *Nautilus*.

("Naval Occurrences," p. 448): "In the opinion of several British officers there were among them many British seamen"; but Commodore Decatur, Lieutenant Gallagher, and the other officers swore that there were none. Of the crew of the *Chesapeake*, he says, "about 32" were British subjects, or about 10 per cent. One or two of these were afterward shot, and some 25, together with a Portuguese boatswain's mate, entered into the British service. So that of the vessels captured by the British, the *Chesapeake* had the largest number of British (about 10 per cent of her crew) on board, the others ranging from that number down to none at all, as in the case of the *Wasp*.

As these eleven ships would probably represent a fair average, this proportion, of from 0 to 10 per cent, should be taken as the proper one. James, however, is of the opinion that those ships manned by Americans were more apt to be captured than those manned by the braver British; which calls for an examination of the crews of the remaining vessels. Of the American sloop *Peacock*, James says ("Naval Occurrences," p. 348) that "several of her men were recognized as British seamen"; even if this were true, "several" could not probably mean more than sixteen, or 10 per cent. Of the second *Wasp* he says, "Captain Blakely was a native of Dublin, and, along with some English and Scotch, did not, it may be certain, neglect to have in his crew a great many Irish." Now Captain Blakely left Ireland when he was but 16 months

old, and the rest of James's statement is avowedly mere conjecture. It was asserted positively in the American newspapers that the *Wasp,* which sailed from Portsmouth, was manned exclusively by New Englanders, except a small draft of men from a Baltimore privateer, and that there was not a foreigner in her crew. Of the *Hornet* James states that "some of her men were natives of the United Kingdom"; but he gives no authority, and the men he refers to were in all probability those spoken of in the journal of one of the *Hornet's* officers, which says that "many of our men [Americans] had been impressed in the British service." As regards the gunboats, James asserts that they were commanded by "Commodore Joshua Barney, a native of Ireland." This officer, however, was born at Baltimore on July 6, 1759. As to the *Constitution,* Brenton, as already mentioned, supposes the number of British sailors in her crew to have been 200; James makes it less, or about 150. Respecting this, the only definite statements I can find in British works are the following: In the "Naval Chronicle," Vol. XXIX, p. 452, an officer of the *Java* states that most of the *Constitution's* men were British, many being from the *Guerrière;* which should be read in connection with James's statement (Vol. VI, p. 156) that but eight of the *Guerrière's* crew deserted, and but two shipped on board the *Constitution.* Moreover, as a matter of fact, these eight men were all impressed Americans. In the "Naval Chronicle" it is also said that the *Chesapeake's* surgeon was an

Irishman, formerly of the British Navy; he was born in Baltimore, and was never in the British navy in his life. The third lieutenant "was supposed to be an Irishman" (Brenton, II, 456). The first lieutenant "was a native of Great Britain, we have been informed" (James, VI, 194); he was Mr. George Parker, born and bred in Virginia. The remaining three citations, if true, prove nothing. "One man had served under Mr. Kent" of the *Guerrière* (James, VI, p. 153). "One had been in the *Achille*" and "one in the *Eurydice*" (Brenton, II, 456). These three men were most probably American seamen who had been impressed on British ships. From Cooper (in "Putnam's Magazine," Vol. I, p. 593) as well as from several places in the *Constitution's* log,[10] we learned that those of the crew who were British deserters were discharged from the *Constitution* before she left port, as they were afraid to serve in a war against Great Britain. That this fear was justifiable may be seen by reading James, Vol. IV, p. 483. Of the four men taken by the *Leopard* from the *Chesapeake*, as deserters, one was hung and three scourged. In reality the crew of the *Constitution* probably did not contain a dozen British sailors; in her last cruises she was manned almost

[10] See her log-book (Vol. II, Feb. 1, 1812, to Dec. 13, 1813); especially on July 12th, when twelve men were discharged. In some of Hull's letters he alludes to the desire of the British part of the crew to serve on the gun-boats or in the ports; and then writes that "in accordance with the instructions sent him by the Secretary of the Navy" he had allowed the British-born portion to leave the ship. The log-books are in the Bureau of Navigation.

exclusively by New Englanders. The only remaining vessel is the *United States*, respecting whose crew some remarkable statements have been made. Marshall (Vol. II, p. 1019) writes that Commodore Decatur "declared there was not a seaman in his ship who had not served from 5 to 12 years in a British man-of-war," from which he concludes that they were British themselves. It may be questioned whether Decatur ever made such an assertion; or if he did, it is safe to asume again that his men were long-impressed Americans.[11]

[11] At the beginning of the war there were on record in the American State Department 6,257 cases of impressed American seamen. These could represent but a small part of the whole, which must have amounted to 20,000 men, or more than sufficient to man our entire navy five times over. According to the British Admiralty Report to the House of Commons, February 1, 1815, 2,548 impressed American seamen, who refused to serve against their country, were imprisoned in 1812. According to Lord Castlereagh's speech in the House, February 18, 1813, 3,300 men claiming to be American subjects were serving in the British navy in January, 1811, and he certainly did not give anything like the whole number. In the American service the term of enlistment extended for two years, and the frigate *United States*, referred to, had not had her crew for any very great length of time as yet. If such a crew were selected at random from American sailors, among them there would be, owing to the small number serving in our own navy and the enormous number impressed into the British navy, probably but one of the former to two of the latter. As already mentioned the American always left a British man-of-war as soon as he could, by desertion or discharge; but he had no unwillingness to serve in the home navy, where the pay was larger and the discipline far more humane, not to speak of motives of patriotism. Even if the ex-British man-of-war's-man kept out of service for some time, he would be very apt to enlist when a war

Of the *Carolina's* crew of 70 men, five were British. This fact was not found out till three deserted, when an investigation was made and the two other British discharged. Captain Henly, in reporting these facts, made no concealment of his surprise that there should be any British at all in his crew.[12]

From these facts and citations we may accordingly conclude that the proportion of British seamen serving on American ships *after the war broke out,* varied between none, as on the *Wasp* and *Constitution,* to ten per cent, as on the *Chesapeake* and *Essex.* On the average, nine-tenths of each of our crews were American seamen, and about one-twentieth British, the remainder being a mixture of various nationalities.

On the other hand, it is to be said that the British frigate *Guerrière* had ten Americans among her crew, who were permitted to go below during action, and the *Macedonian* eight, who were not allowed that privilege, three of them being killed. Three of the British sloop *Peacock's* men were Americans, who were forced to fight against the *Hornet;* one of them was killed. Two of the *Epervier's* men were Americans, who were also forced to fight. When the crew of the *Nautilus* was exchanged, a number of other American prisoners were sent with them; among these were a number of American

broke out, while his country undertook largely to avenge his own wrongs.

[12] See his letter in "Letters of Masters-Commandant," 1814, I. No. 116.

seamen who had been serving in the *Shannon, Acasta, Africa,* and various other vessels. So there was also a certain proportion of Americans among the British crews, although forming a smaller percentage of them than the British did on board the American ships. In neither case was the number sufficient to at all affect the result.

The crews of our ships being thus mainly native Americans, it may be interesting to try to find out the proportions that were furnished by the different sections of the country. There is not much difficulty about the officers. The captains, masters commandant, lieutenants, marine officers, whose birthplaces are given in the Navy List of 1816,—240 in all,—came from the various States as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| New England | N. H., | 5 | 42 |
| | Mass., | 20 | |
| | R. I., | 11 | |
| | Conn., | 6 | |
| Middle States | N. Y., | 17 | 78 |
| | N. J., | 22 | |
| | Penn., | 35 | |
| | Del., | 4 | |
| District of Columbia | D. C., | 4 | 4 |
| Southern States | Md., | 46 | 110 |
| | Va., | 42 | |
| | N. C., | 4 | |
| | S. C., | 16 | |
| | Ga., | 2 | |
| | La., | 4 | |
| | Ky., | 2 | |
| Total of given birthplaces . . . . | | | 240 |

Thus, Maryland furnished, both absolutely and proportionately, the greatest number of officers, Virginia, then the most populous of all the States, coming next; four-fifths of the remainder came from the Northern States.

It is more difficult to get at the birthplaces of the sailors. Something can be inferred from the number of privateers and letters of marque fitted out. Here Baltimore again headed the list; following closely came New York, Philadelphia, and the New England coast towns, with, alone among the Southern ports, Charleston, S. C. A more accurate idea of the quotas of sailors furnished by the different sections can be arrived at by comparing the total amount of tonnage the country possessed at the outbreak of the war. Speaking roughly, 44 per cent of it belonged to New England, 32 per cent to the Middle States, and 11 per cent to Maryland. This makes it *probable* (but of course not certain) that three-fourths of the common sailors hailed from the Northern States, half the remainder from Maryland, and the rest chiefly from Virginia and South Carolina.

Having thus discussed somewhat at length the character of our officers and crews, it will now be necessary to present some statistical tables to give a more accurate idea of the composition of the navy, the tonnage, complements, and armaments of the ships, etc.

At the beginning of the war the Government pos-

sessed six navy yards (all but the last established in 1801) as follows:[13]

| | Place. | Original cost. | Minimum number of men employed. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Portsmouth, N. H., | $ 5,500 | 10 |
| 2. | Charleston, Mass., | 39,214 | 20 |
| 3. | New York, | 40,000 | 102 |
| 4. | Philadelphia, | 37,000 | 13 |
| 5. | Washington, | 4,000 | 36 |
| 6. | Gosport, | 12,000 | 16 |

In 1812 the following was the number of officers in the navy:[14]

12 captains,
10 masters commandant,
73 lieutenants,
53 masters,
310 midshipmen,
42 marine officers.

500

At the opening of the year, the number of seamen, ordinary seamen, and boys in service was 4,010, and enough more were recruited to increase it to 5,230, of whom only 2,346 were destined for the cruising war vessels, the remainder being detailed for forts, gun-boats, navy yards, the lakes, etc.[15] The marine corps was already ample, consisting of 1,523 men.[16]

No regular navy lists were published till 1816, and I have been able to get very little information respecting the increase in officers and men during

[13] Report of Naval Secretary Jones, Nov. 30, 1814.

[14] "List of Vessels," etc., by Geo. H. Preble, U.S.N. (1874).

[15] Report of Secretary Paul Hamilton, Feb. 21, 1812.

[16] Ibid

1813 and 1814; but we have full returns for 1815, which may be summarized as follows:[17]

| | |
|---|---|
| 30 captains, | 25 masters commandant, |
| 141 lieutenants, | 24 commanders, |
| 510 midshipmen, | 230 sailing-masters, |
| 50 surgeons, | 12 chaplains, |
| 50 pursers, | 10 coast pilots, |
| 45 captain's clerks, | 80 surgeon's mates, |

530 boatswains, gunners, carpenters, and sailmakers,
268 boatswain's mates, gunner's mates, etc.,
1,106 quarter gunners, etc.,
5,000 able seamen,
6,849 ordinary seamen and boys.
Making a total of 14,960, with 2,715 marines.[18]

Comparing this list with the figures given before, it can be seen that during the course of the war our navy grew enormously, increasing to between three and four times its original size.

At the beginning of the year 1812 the navy of the United States on the ocean consisted of the following vessels, which either were, or could have been, made available during the war:[19]

| Rate (Guns) | Name. | Where Built. | When Built. | Tonnage. | Cost. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 44 | *United States*, | Philadelphia, | 1797 | 1576 | $299,336 |
| 44 | *Constitution*, | Boston, | 1797 | 1576 | 302,718 |
| 44 | *President*, | New York, | 1800 | 1576 | 220,910 |
| 38 | *Constellation*, | Baltimore, | 1797 | 1265 | 314,218 |
| 38 | *Congress*, | Portsmouth, | 1799 | 1268 | 197,246 |
| 38 | *Chesapeake*, | Norfolk, | 1799 | 1244 | 220,677 |
| 32 | *Essex*, | Salem, | 1799 | 860 | 139,362 |
| 28 | *Adams*, | New York, | 1799 | 560 | 76,622 |
| 18 | *Hornet*, | Baltimore, | 1805 | 480 | 52,603 |
| 18 | *Wasp*, | Washington, | 1806 | 450 | 40,000 |
| 16 | *Argus*, | Boston, | 1803 | 298 | 37,428 |
| 16 | *Syren*, | Philadelphia, | 1803 | 250 | 32,521 |
| 14 | *Nautilus*, | Baltimore, | 1803 | 185 | 18,763 |
| 14 | *Vixen*, | Baltimore, | 1803 | 185 | 20,872 |
| 12 | *Enterprise*, | Baltimore, | 1799 | 165 | 16,240 |
| 12 | *Viper*, | Purchased, | 1810 | 148 | |

[17] Seybert's "Statistical Annals," p. 676 (Philadelphia, 1818).
[18] Report of Secretary B. W. Crowninshield, April 18, 1816.
[19] Letter of Secretary Benjamin Stoddart to Fifth Con-

There also appeared on the lists the *New York*, 36, *Boston*, 28, and *John Adams*, 28. The two former were condemned hulks; the latter was entirely rebuilt after the war. The *Hornet* was originally a brig of 440 tons, and 18 guns; having been transformed into a ship, she was pierced for 20 guns, and in size was of an intermediate grade between the *Wasp* and the heavy sloops, built somewhat later, of 509 tons. Her armament consisted of 32-pound carronades, with the exception of the two bow-guns, which were long 12's. The whole broadside was in nominal weight just 300 pounds; in actual weight about 277 pounds. Her complement of men was 140, but during the war she generally left port with 150.[20] The *Wasp* had been a ship from the beginning, mounted the number of guns she rated (of the same calibres as the *Hornet's*) and carried some ten men less. She was about the same length as the British 18-gun brig-sloop, but, being narrower, measured nearly 30 tons less. The *Argus* and *Syren* were similar and very fine brigs, the former being the longer. Each carried two more guns than she rated; and

gress, Dec. 24, 1798; Letters of Secretary Paul Hamilton, Feb. 21, 1812; "American State Papers," Vol. XIX, p. 149. See also "The History of the Navy of the United States," by Lieut. G. E. Emmons, U. S. N. (published in Washington, MDCCCLIII, under the authority of the Navy Department.

[20] In the *Hornet's* log of Oct. 25, 1812, while in port, it is mentioned that she had 158 men; four men who were sick were left behind before she started. (See, in the Navy Archives, the Log-book, *Hornet*, *Wasp*, and *Argus*, July 20, 1809, to Oct. 6, 1813).

the *Argus,* in addition, had a couple thrust through the bridle-ports. The guns were 24-pound carronades, with two long 12's for bow-chasers. The proper complement of men was 100, but each sailed usually with about 125. The four smaller craft were originally schooners, armed with the same number of light long guns as they rated, and carrying some 70 men apiece; but they had been very effectually ruined by being changed into brigs, with crews increased to a hundred men. Each was armed with 18-pound carronades, carrying two more than she rated. The *Enterprise,* in fact, mounted 16 guns, having two long nines thrust through the bridle-ports. These little brigs were slow, not very seaworthy, and overcrowded with men and guns; they all fell into the enemy's hands without doing any good whatever, with the single exception of the *Enterprise,* which escaped capture by sheer good luck, and in her only battle happened to be pitted against one of the corresponding and equally bad class of British gun-brigs. The *Adams* after several changes of form finally became a flush-decked corvette. The *Essex* had originally mounted twenty-six long 12's on her main-deck, and sixteen 24-pound carronades on her spar-deck; but official wisdom changed this, giving her 46 guns, twenty-four 32-pound carronades, and two long 12's on the main-deck, and sixteen 32-pound carronades with four long 12's on the spar-deck. When Captain Porter had command of her he was deeply sensible of the disadvantages of an armament which

put him at the mercy of any ordinary antagonist who could choose his distance; accordingly he petitioned several times, but always without success, to have his long 12's returned to him.

The American 38's were about the size of the British frigates of the same rate, and armed almost exactly in the same way, each having 28 long 18's on the main-deck and 20 32-pound carronades on the spar-deck. The proper complement was 300 men, but each carried from 40 to 80 more.[21]

Our three 44-gun ships were the finest frigates then afloat (although the British possessed some as heavy, such as the *Egyptienne*, 44). They were beautifully modeled, with very thick scantling, extremely stout masts, and heavy cannon. Each carried on her main-deck thirty long 24's, and on her spar-deck two long bow-chasers, and twenty or twenty-two carronades—42-pounders on the *Presi-*

[21] The *Chesapeake*, by some curious mistake, was frequently rated as a 44, and this drew in its train a number of attendant errors. When she was captured, James says that in one of her lockers was found a letter, dated in February, 1811, from Robert Smith, the Secretary of War, to Captain Evans, at Boston, directing him to open houses of rendezvous for manning the *Chesapeake*, and enumerating her crew at a total of 443. Naturally this gave British historians the idea that such was the ordinary complement of our 38-gun frigates. But the ordering so large a crew was merely a mistake, as may be seen by a letter from Captain Bainbridge to the Secretary of the Navy, which is given in full in the "Captains' Letters," Vol. XXV, No. 19 (Navy Archives). In it he mentions the extraordinary number of men ordered for the *Chesapeake*, as it equals in number the crews of our 44-gun frigates, whereas the *Chesapeake* is of the class of the *Congress* and *Constellation*.

*dent* and *United States,* 32-pounders on the *Constitution.* Each sailed with a crew of about 450 men —50 in excess of the regular complement.[22]

It may be as well to mention here the only other class of vessels that we employed during the war. This was composed of the ship-sloops built in 1813, which got to sea in 1814. They were very fine vessels, measuring 509 tons apiece,[23] with very thick scantling and stout masts and spars. Each carried twenty 32-pound carronades and two long 12's, with a crew nominally of 160 men, but with usually a few supernumeraries.[24]

[22] The *President* when in action with the *Endymion* had 450 men aboard, as sworn by Decatur; the muster-roll of the *Constitution*, a few days before her action with the *Guerrière*, contains 464 names (including 51 marines); 8 men were absent in a prize, so she had aboard in the action 456. Her muster-roll just before the action with the *Cyane* and *Levant* shows 461 names.

[23] The dimensions were 117 feet 11 inches upon the gun-deck, 97 feet 6 inches keel for tonnage, measuring from one foot before the forward perpendicular and along the base line to the front of the rabbet of the port, deducting $\frac{3}{8}$ of the moulded breadth of the beam, which is 31 feet 6 inches; making $509\frac{21}{95}$ tons. (See in Navy Archives, "Contracts," Vol. II, p. 137.)

[24] The *Peacock* had 166 men, as we learn from her commander, Warrington's, letter of June 1st (Letter No. 140 in "Masters-Commandant's Letters," 1814, Vol. I). The *Frolic* took aboard "10 or 12 men beyond her regular complement." (See letter of Joseph Bainbridge, No. 51, in same Vol.) Accordingly, when she was captured by the *Orpheus*, the commander of the latter, Captain Hugh Pigot, reported the number of men aboard to be 171. The *Wasp* left port with 173 men, with which she fought her first action; she had a much smaller number aboard in her second.

The British vessels encountered were similar, but generally inferior, to our own. The only 24-pounder frigate we encountered was the *Endymion,* of about a fifth less force than the *President.* Their 38-gun frigates were almost exactly like ours, but with fewer men in crew as a rule. They were three times matched against our 44-gun frigates, to which they were inferior about as three is to four. Their 36-gun frigates were larger than the *Essex,* with a more numerous crew, but the same number of guns; carrying on the lower deck, however, long 18's instead of 32-pound carronades,—a much more effective armament. The 32-gun frigates were smaller, with long 12's on the main-deck. The largest sloops were also frigate-built, carrying twenty-two 32-pound carronades on the main-deck, and twelve lighter guns on the quarter-deck and forecastle, with a crew of 180. The large flush-decked ship-sloops carried 21 or 23 guns, with a crew of 140 men. But our vessels most often came in contact with the British 18-gun brig-sloop; this was a tubby craft, heavier than any of our brigs, being about the size of the *Hornet.* The crew consisted of from 110 to 135 men; ordinarily each was armed with sixteen 32-pound carronades, two long 6's, and a shifting 12-pound carronade; often with a light long gun as a stern-chaser, making 20 in all. The *Reindeer* and *Peacock* had only 24-pound carronades; the *Epervier* had but eighteen guns, all carronades.[25]

[25] The *Epervier* was taken into our service under the same name and rate. Both Preble and Emmons describe her as of

Among the stock accusations against our navy of 1812 were, and are, statements that our vessels were rated at less than their real force, and in particular that our large frigates were "disguised line-of-battle ships." As regards the ratings, most vessels of that time carried more guns than they rated; the disparity was less in the French than in either the British or American navies. Our 38-gun frigates carried 48 guns, the exact number the British 38's possessed. The worst case of underrating in our navy was the Essex, which rated 32, and carried 46 guns, so that her real was 44 per cent in excess of her nominal force; but this was not as bad as the British sloop *Cyane,* which was rated at 20 or 22, and carried 34 guns, so that she had either 55 or 70 per cent greater real than nominal force. At the beginning of the war we owned two 18-gun ship-sloops, one mounting 18 and the other 20 guns; the 18-gun brig-sloops they captured mounted each 19 guns, so the average was the same. Later we built sloops that rated 18 and mounted 22 guns, but when one was captured it was also put down in the British navy list as an 18-gun ship-sloop. During all the combats of the war there were but four vessels that carried as few guns as they rated. Two were British, the *Epervier* and *Levant,* and two American, the *Wasp* and *Adams.* One navy

477 tons. Warrington, her captor, however, says: "The surveyor of the port has just measured the *Epervier*, and reports her 467 tons." (In the Navy Archives, "Masters-Commandant's Letters," 1814, I, No. 125.)

For a full discussion of tonnage, see Appendix A.

was certainly as deceptive as another, so far as underrating went.

The force of the statement that our large frigates were disguised line-of-battle ships, of course depends entirely upon what the words "frigate" and "line-of-battle ship" mean. When, on the 10th of August, 1653, De Ruyter saved a great convoy by beating off Sir George Ayscough's fleet of 38 sail, the largest of the Dutch admiral's "33 sail of the line" carried but 30 guns and 150 men, and his own flagship but 28 guns and 134 men.[26] The Dutch book from which this statement is taken speaks indifferently of frigates of 18, 40, and 58 guns. Toward the end of the eighteenth century the terms had crystallized. Frigate then meant a so-called single-decked ship; it in reality possessed two decks, the main, or gun-deck, and the upper one, which had no name at all until our sailors christened it spar-deck. The gun-deck possessed a complete battery, and the spar-deck an interrupted one, mounting guns on the forecastle and quarter-deck. At that time all "two-decked" or "three-decked" (in reality three and four-decked) ships were liners. But in 1812 this had changed somewhat; as the various nations built more and more powerful vessels, the lower rates of the different divisions were dropped.

[26] "La Vie et les Actions Memorables du Sr. Michel de Ruyter à Amsterdam, Chez Henry et Theodore Boom, MDCLXXXVII." The work is by Barthelemy Pielat, a surgeon in de Ruyter's fleet, and personally present during many of his battles. It is written in French, but is in tone more strongly anti-French than anti-English.

Thus the British ship *Cyane,* captured by the *Constitution,* was in reality a small frigate, with a main-deck battery of 22 guns, and 12 guns on the spar-deck; a few years before she would have been called a 24-gun frigate, but she then ranked merely as a 22-gun sloop. Similarly the 50 and 64-gun ships that had fought in the line at the Doggerbank, Camperdown, and even at Aboukir, were now no longer deemed fit for that purpose, and the 74 was the lowest line-of-battle ship.

The *Constitution, President,* and *States* must then be compared with the existing European vessels that were classed as frigates. The French in 1812 had no 24-pounder frigates, for the very good reason that they had all fallen victims to the English 18-pounders; but in July of that year a Danish frigate, the *Nayaden,* which carried long 24's, was destroyed by the English ship *Dictator,* 64.

The British frigates were of several rates. The lowest rated 32, carrying in all 40 guns, 26 long 12's on the main-deck and 14 24-pound carronades on the spar-deck—a broadside of 324 pounds.[27] The 36-gun frigates, like the *Phoebe,* carried 46 guns, 26 long 18's on the gun-deck and 32-pound carronades above. The 38-gun frigates, like the *Macedonian,* carried 48 or 49 guns, long 18's below and 32-pound carronades above. The 32-gun frigates, then, presented in broadsides 13 long 12's below and 7 24-pound carronades above: the 38-gun

[27] In all these vessels there were generally two long 6's or 9's substituted for the bow-chase carronades.

frigates, 14 long 18's below and 10 32-pound carronades above; so that a 44-gun frigate would naturally present 15 long 24's below and 12 42-pound carronades above, as the *United States* did at first. The rate was perfectly proper, for French, British, and Danes already possessed 24-pounder frigates; and there was really less disparity between the force and rate of a 44 that carried 54 guns, than there was in a 38 that carried 49, or, like the *Shannon*, 52. Nor was this all. Two of our three victories were won by the *Constitution*, which only carried 32-pound carronades, and once 54 and once 52 guns; and as two-thirds of the work was thus done by this vessel, I shall now compare her with the largest British frigates. Her broadside force consisted of 15 long 24's on the main-deck, and on the spar-deck one long 24, and in one case 10, in the other 11 32-pound carronades—a broadside of 704 or 736 pounds.[28] There was then in the British navy the *Acasta*, 40, carrying in broadside 15 long 18's and 11 32-pound carronades; when the spar-deck batteries are equal, the addition of 90 pounds to the main-deck broadside (which is all the superiority of the *Constitution* over the *Acasta*) is certainly not enough to make the distinction between a frigate and a disguised 74. But not considering the *Acasta*, there were in the British navy three 24-pounder frigates, the *Cornwallis*, *Indefatigable*, and *Endymion*. We only came in contact with the latter in

[28] Nominally; in reality about 7 per cent less on account of the short weight in metal.

1815, when the *Constitution* had but 52 guns. The *Endymion* then had an armament of 28 long 24's, 2 long 18's, and 20 32-pound carronades, making a broadside of 674 pounds,[29] or including a shifting 24-pound carronade, of 698 pounds—just *six pounds*, or 1 per cent, less than the force of that "disguised line-of-battle ship" the *Constitution!* As the *Endymion* only rated as a 40, and the *Constitution* as a 44, it was in reality the former and not the latter which was underrated. I have taken the *Constitution*, because the British had more to do with her than they did with our other two 44's taken together. The latter were both of heavier metal than the *Constitution*, carrying 42-pound carronades. In 1812 the *United States* carried her full 54 guns, throwing a broadside of 846 pounds; when captured, the *President* carried 53, having substituted a 24-pound carronade for two of her 42's, and her broadside amounted to 828 pounds, or 16 per cent *nominal*, and, on account of the short weight of her shot, 9 per cent *real* excess over the *Endymion*. If this difference made her a line-of-battle ship, then the *Endymion* was doubly a line-of-battle ship compared to the *Congress* or *Constellation*. Moreover, the American commanders found their 42-pound carronades too heavy; as I have said the *Constitution* only mounted 32's, and the *United States* landed 6 of her guns. When, in 1813, she attempted to break the blockade, she carried but 48 guns, throw-

[29] According to James 664 pounds; he omits the chase guns for no reason.

ing a broadside of 720 pounds—just 3 per cent more than the *Endymion*.[30] If our frigates were line-of-battle ships the disguise was certainly marvelously complete, and they had a number of companions equally disguised in the British ranks.

The 44's were thus *true frigates*, with one complete battery of long guns and one interrupted one of carronades. That they were better than any other frigates was highly creditable to our ingenuity and national skill. We can not, perhaps, lay claim to the invention and first use of the heavy frigate, for 24-pounder frigates were already in the service of at least three nations, and the French 36-pound carronade, in use on their spar-decks, threw a heavier ball than our 42-pounder. But we had enlarged and perfected the heavy frigate, and were the first nation that ever used it effectively. The French *Forte* and the Danish *Nayaden* shared the fate of ships carrying guns of lighter calibre; and the British 24-pounders, like the *Endymion*, had never accomplished anything. Hitherto there had been a strong feeling, especially in England, that an 18-pound gun was as effective as a 24 in arming a frig-

[30] It was on account of this difference of 3 per cent that Captain Hardy refused to allow the *Endymion* to meet the *States* (James vi, p. 470). This was during the course of some challenges and counter-challenges which ended in nothing, Decatur in his turn being unwilling to have the *Macedonian* meet the *Statira*, unless the latter should agree not to take on a picked crew. He was perfectly right in this; but he ought never to have sent the challenge at all, as two ships but an hour or two out of port would be at a frightful disadvantage in a fight.

ate; we made a complete revolution in this respect. England had been building only 18-pounder vessels when she ought to have been building 24-pounders. It was greatly to our credit that our average frigate was superior to the average British frigate; exactly as it was to our discredit that the *Essex* was so ineffectively armed. Captain Porter owed his defeat chiefly to his ineffective guns, but also to having lost his topmast, to the weather being unfavorable, and, still more, to the admirable skill with which Hilyar used his superior armament. The *Java, Macedonian,* and *Guerrière* owed their defeat partly to their lighter guns, but much more to the fact that their captains and seamen did not display either as good seamanship or as good gunnery as their foes. Inferiority in armament was a factor to be taken into account in all the four cases, but it was more marked in that of the *Essex* than in the other three; it would have been fairer for Porter to say that he had been captured by a line-of-battle ship, than for the captain of the *Java* to make that assertion. In this last case the forces of the two ships compared almost exactly as their rates. A 44 was matched against a 38; it was not surprising that she should win, but it *was* surprising that she should win with ease and impunity. The long 24's on the *Constitution's* gun-deck no more made her a line-of-battle ship than the 32-pound carronades mounted on an English frigate's quarter-deck and forecastle made *her* a line-of-battle ship when opposed to a Frenchman with only 8's and 6's on his spar-deck.

When, a few years before, the English *Phœbe* had captured the French *Nereide*, their broadsides were respectively 407 and 258 pounds, a greater disparity than in any of our successful fights; yet no author thought of claiming that the *Phœbe* was anything but a frigate. So with the *Clyde*, throwing 425 pounds, which took the *Vestale*, throwing but 246. The facts were that 18-pounder frigates had captured 12-pounders, exactly as our 24-pounders in turn captured the 18-pounders.

Shortly before Great Britain declared war on us, one of her 18-pounder frigates, the *San Florenzo*, throwing 476 lbs. in a broadside, captured the 12-pounder French frigate *Psyché*, whose broadside was only 246 lbs. The force of the former was thus almost double that of the latter, yet the battle was long and desperate, the English losing 48 and the French 124 men. This conflict, then, reflected as much credit on the skill and seamanship of the defeated as of the victorious side; the difference in loss could fairly be ascribed to the difference in weight of metal. But where, as in the famous ship-duels of 1812, the difference in force is only a fifth, instead of a half, and yet the slaughter, instead of being as five is to two, is as six to one, then the victory is certainly to be ascribed as much to superiority in skill as to superiority in force. But, on the other hand, it should always be remembered that there was a very decided superiority in force. It is a very discreditable feature of many of our naval histories that they utterly ignore this superiority,

seeming ashamed to confess that it existed. In reality it was something to be proud of. It was highly to the credit of the United States that her frigates were of better make and armament than any others; it always speaks well for a nation's energy and capacity that any of her implements of warfare are of a superior kind. This is a perfectly legitimate reason for pride.

It spoke well for the Prussians in 1866 that they opposed breech-loaders to the muzzle-loaders of the Austrians; but it would be folly to give all the credit of the victory to the breech-loaders and none to Moltke and his lieutenants. Thus, it must be remembered that two things contributed to our victories. One was the excellent make and armament of our ships; the other was the skilful seamanship, excellent discipline, and superb gunnery of the men who were in them. British writers are apt only to speak of the first, and Americans only of the last, whereas both should be taken into consideration.

To sum up: the American 44-gun frigate was a true frigate, in build and armament, properly rated, stronger than a 38-gun frigate just about in the proportion of 44 to 38, and not exceeding in strength an 18-pounder frigate as much as the latter exceeded one carrying 12-pounders. They were in no way whatever line-of-battle ships; but they were superior to any other frigates afloat, and, what is still more important, they were better manned and commanded than the *average* frigate of any other navy. Lord Codrington says ("Memoirs," I, p.

310): "But I well know the system of favoritism and borough corruption prevails so very much that many people are promoted and kept in command that should be dismissed the service, and while such is the case the few Americans chosen for their merit may be expected to follow up their successes except where they meet with our best officers on even terms." [31] The small size of our navy was probably to a certain extent effective in keeping it up to a high standard; but this is not the only explanation, as can be seen by Portugal's small and poor navy. On the other hand, the champions or pick of a large navy *ought* to be better than the champions of a small one.[32]

[31] To show that I am not quoting an authority biased in our favor I will give Sir Edward Codrington's opinion of our rural better class (i, 318). "It is curious to observe the animosity which prevails here among what is called the better order of people, which I think is more a misnomer here than in any other country I have ever been. Their *whig* and *tory* are democrat and federalist, and it would seem for the sake of giving vent to that bitterness of hatred which marks the Yankee character, every gentleman (God save the term) who takes possession of a property adopts the opposite political creed to that of his nearest neighbor."

[32] In speaking of tonnage I wish I could have got better authority than James for the British side of the question. He is so bitter that it involuntarily gives one a distrust of his judgment. Thus, in speaking of the *Penguin's* capture, he, in endeavoring to show that the *Hornet's* loss was greater than she acknowledged, says, "several of the dangerously wounded were thrown overboard because the surgeon was afraid to amputate, owing to his want of experience" ("Naval Occurrences," 492). Now what could persuade a writer to make such a foolish accusation? No matter how utterly depraved and brutal Captain Biddle might be, he would cer-

Again, the armaments of the American as well as of the British ships were composed of three very different styles of guns. The first, or long gun, was

tainly not throw his wounded over alive because he feared they might die. Again, in vol. vi, p. 546, he says: "Captain Stewart had caused the *Cyane* to be painted to resemble a 36-gun frigate. The object of this was to aggrandize his exploit in the eyes of the gaping citizens of Boston." No matter how skilful an artist Captain Stewart was, and no matter how great the gaping capacities of the Bostonians, the *Cyane* (which, by the way, went to New York and not Boston) could no more be painted to look like a 36-gun frigate than a schooner could be painted to look like a brig. Instances of rancor like these two occur constantly in his work, and make it very difficult to separate what is matter of fact from what is matter of opinion. I always rely on the British official accounts when they can be reached, except in the case of the *Java*, which seem garbled. That such was sometimes the case with British officials is testified to by both James (vol. iv, p. 17) and Brenton (vol. ii, p. 454, note). From the "Memoir of Admiral Broke" we learn that his public letter was wrong in a number of particulars. See also any one of the numerous biographies of Lord Dundonald, the hero of the little *Speedy's* fight. It is very unfortunate that the British stopped publishing official accounts of their defeats; it could not well help giving rise to unpleasant suspicions.

It may be as well to mention here, again, that James' accusations do not really detract from the interest attaching to the war, and its value for purposes of study. If, as he says, the American commanders were cowards, and their crews renegades, it is well worth while to learn the lesson that good training will make such men able to beat brave officers with loyal crews. And why did the British have such bad average crews as he makes out? He says, for instance, that the *Java's* was unusually bad; yet Brenton says (vol. ii, p. 461) it was like "the generality of our crews." It is worth while explaining the reason that such a crew was generally better than a French and worse than an American one.

enormously long and thick-barreled in comparison to its bore, and in consequence very heavy; it possessed a very long range, and varied in calibre from two to forty-two pounds. The ordinary calibres in our navy were 6, 9, 12, 18, and 24. The second style was the carronade, a short, light gun of large bore; compared to a long gun of the same weight it carried a much heavier ball for a much shorter distance. The chief calibres were 9, 12, 18, 24, 32, 42, and 68 pounders, the first and the last being hardly in use in our navy. The third style was the columbiad, of an intermediate grade between the first two. Thus it is seen that a gun of one style by no means corresponds to a gun of another style of the same calibre. As a rough example, a long 12, a columbiad, 18, and a 32-pound carronade would be about equivalent to one another. These guns were mounted on two different types of vessel. The first was flush-decked; that is, it had a single straight open deck on which all the guns were mounted. This class included one heavy corvette (the *Adams*), the ship-sloops, and the brig-sloops. Through the bow-chase port, on each side, each of these mounted a long gun; the rest of their guns were carronades, except in the case of the *Adams*, which had all long guns. Above these came the frigates, whose gun-deck was covered above by another deck; on the fore and aft parts (forecastle and quarter-deck) on this upper, open deck were also mounted guns. The main-deck guns were all long, except on the *Essex*, which had carronades; on the

quarter-deck were mounted carronades, and on the forecastle also carronades, with two long bow-chasers.

Where two ships of similar armament fought one another, it is easy to get the comparative force by simply comparing the weight in broadsides, each side presenting very nearly the same proportion of long guns to carronades. For such a broadside we take half the guns mounted in the ordinary way; and all guns mounted on pivots or shifting. Thus Perry's force in guns was 54 to Barclay's 63; yet each presented 34 in broadside. Again, each of the British brig-sloops mounted 19 guns, presenting 10 in broadside. Besides these, some ships mounted bow-chasers run through the bridle-ports, or stern-chasers, neither of which could be used in broadsides. Nevertheless, I include them, both because it works in about an equal number of cases against each navy, and because they were sometimes terribly effective. James excludes the *Guerrière's* bow-chaser; in reality he ought to have included both it and its fellow, as they worked more damage than all the broadside guns put together. Again, he excludes the *Endymion's* bow-chasers, though in her action they proved invaluable. Yet he includes those of the *Enterprise* and *Argus*, though the former's were probably not fired. So I shall take the half of the fixed, plus all the movable, guns aboard, in comparing broadside force.

But the chief difficulty appears when guns of one style are matched against those of another. If a

ship armed with long 12's meets one armed with 32-pound carronades, which is superior in force? At long range the first, and at short range the second; and of course each captain is pretty sure to insist that "circumstances" forced him to fight at a disadvantage. The result would depend largely on the skill or luck of each commander in choosing position.

One thing is certain; long guns are more formidable than carronades of the same calibre. There are exemplifications of this rule on both sides; of course, American writers, as a rule, only pay attention to one set of cases and British to the others. The *Cyane* and *Levant* threw a heavier broadside than the *Constitution* but were certainly less formidably armed; and the *Essex* threw a heavier broadside than the *Phoebe*, yet was also less formidable. On Lake Ontario the American ship *General Pike* threw less metal at a broadside than either of her two chief antagonists, but neither could be called her equal; while on Lake Champlain a parallel case is afforded by the British ship *Confiance*. Supposing that two ships throw the same broadside weight of metal, one from long guns, the other from carronades, at short range they are equal; at long, one has it all her own way. Her captain thus certainly has a great superiority of force, and if he does not take advantage of it it is owing to his adversary's skill or his own mismanagement. As a mere approximation, it may be assumed, in comparing the broadsides of two vessels or squadrons, that long guns

count for at least twice as much as carronades of the same calibre. Thus on Lake Champlain Captain Downie possessed an immense advantage in his long guns, which Commodore Macdonough's exceedingly good arrangements nullified. Sometimes part of the advantage may be willingly foregone, so as to acquire some other. Had the *Constitution* kept at long bowls with the *Cyane* and *Levant* she could have probably captured one without any loss to herself, while the other would have escaped; she preferred to run down close so as to ensure the capture of both, knowing that even at close quarters long guns are somewhat better than short ones (not to mention her other advantages in thick scantling, speed, etc.). The British carronades often upset in action; this was either owing to their having been insufficiently secured, and to this remaining undiscovered because the men were not exercised at the guns, or else it was because the unpracticed sailors would greatly overcharge them. Our better-trained sailors on the ocean rarely committed these blunders, but the less-skilled crews on the lakes did so as often as their antagonists.

But while the Americans thus, as a rule, had heavier and better-fitted guns, they labored under one or two disadvantages. Our foundries were generally not as good as those of the British, and our guns, in consequence, more likely to burst; it was an accident of this nature which saved the British *Belvidera;* and the *General Pike*, under Commodore Chauncy, and the new American frigate *Guerrière*

suffered in the same way; while often the muzzles of the guns would crack. A more universal disadvantage was in the short weight of our shot. When Captain Blakely sunk the *Avon* he officially reported that her four shot which came aboard weighed just 32 pounds apiece, a pound and three-quarters more than his *heaviest;* this would make his average shot about 2½ pounds less, or rather over 7 per cent. Exactly similar statements were made by the officers of the *Constitution* in her three engagements. Thus when she fought the *Java*, she threw at a broadside, as already stated, 704 pounds; the *Java* mounted 28 long 18's, 18 32-pound carronades, 2 long 12's, and one shifting 24-pound carronade, a broadside of 576 pounds.

Yet by the actual weighing of all the different shot on both sides it was found that the difference in broadside force was only about 77 pounds, or the *Constitution's* shot were about 7 per cent short weight. The long 24's of the *United States* each threw a shot 4¼ pounds heavier than the long 18's of the *Macedonian;* here again the difference was about 7 per cent. The same difference existed in favor of the *Penguin* and *Epervier* compared with the *Wasp* and *Hornet*. Mr. Fenimore Cooper[33] weighed a great number of shot some time after the war. The later castings, even, weighed nearly 5 per cent less than the British shot, and some of the older ones, about 9 per cent. The average is safe to take at 7 per cent less, and I shall

[33] See "Naval History," i, p. 380.

throughout make this allowance for ocean cruisers. The deficit was sometimes owing to windage, but more often the shot was of full size but defective in density.

The effect of this can be gathered from the following quotation from the work of a British artillerist: "The greater the density of shot of like calibres, projected with equal velocity and elevation, the greater the range, accuracy, and penetration." [34] This defectiveness in density might be a serious injury in a contest at a long distance, but would make but little difference at close quarters (although it may have been partly owing to their short weight that so many of the *Chesapeake's* shot failed to pentrade the *Shannon's* hull). Thus in the actions with the *Macedonian* and *Java* the American frigates showed excellent practice when the contest was carried on within fair distance, while their first broadsides at long range went very wild; but in the case of the *Guerrière,* the *Constitution* reserved her fire for close quarters, and was probably not at all affected by the short weight of her shot.

As to the officers and crew of a 44-gun frigate, the following was the regular complement established by law:[35]

[34] "Heavy Ordnance," Captain T. F. Simmons, R. A., London, 1837. James supposes that the "Yankee captains" have in each case hunted round till they could get particularly small American shot to weigh; and also denies that short weight is a disadvantage. The last proposition carried out logically would lead to some rather astonishing results.

[35] See State Papers, vol. xiv, 159 (Washington, 1834)

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 captain, | 1 purser, |
| 4 lieutenants, | 1 surgeon, |
| 2 lieutenants of marines, | 2 surgeon's mates, |
| 2 sailing masters, | 1 clerk, |
| 2 master's mates, | 1 carpenter, |
| 7 midshipmen, | 2 carpenter's mates |
| 1 boatswain, | 1 cook, |
| 2 boatswain's mates | 1 chaplain. |
| 1 yeoman of gun-room, | |
| 1 gunner, | 50 |
| 11 quarter gunners. | 120 able seamen, |
| 1 coxswain, | 150 ordinary seamen, |
| 1 sailmaker, | 30 boys, |
| 1 cooper, | 50 marine. |
| 1 steward, | |
| 1 armorer, | 400 in all. |
| 1 master of arms, | |

An 18-gun ship had 32 officers and petty officers, 30 able seamen, 46 ordinary seamen, 12 boys, and 20 marines—140 in all. Sometimes ships put to sea without their full complements (as in the case of the first *Wasp*), but more often with supernumeraries aboard. The weapons for close quarters were pikes, cutlasses, and a few axes; while the marines and some of the topmen had muskets, and occasionally rifles.

In comparing the forces of the contestants I have always given the number of men in crew; but this in most cases was unnecessary. When there were plenty of men to handle the guns, trim the sails, make repairs, act as marines, etc., any additional number simply served to increase the slaughter on board. The *Guerrière* undoubtedly suffered from being short-handed, but neither the *Macedonian* nor *Java* would have been benefited by the presence of a hundred additional men. Barclay possessed about as many men as Perry, but this did not give him an equality of force. The *Penguin* and *Frolic* would

have been taken just as surely had the *Hornet* and *Wasp* had a dozen men less apiece than they did. The principal case where numbers would help would be in a hand-to-hand fight. Thus the *Chesapeake* having fifty more men than the *Shannon* ought to have been successful; but she was not, because the superiority of her crew in numbers was more than counterbalanced by the superiority of the *Shannon's* crew in other respects. The result of the battle of Lake Champlain, which was fought at anchor, with the fleets too far apart for musketry to reach, was not in the slightest degree affected by the number of men on either side, as both combatants had amply enough to manage the guns and perform every other service.

In all these conflicts the courage of both parties is taken for granted; it was not so much a factor in gaining the victory, as one which if lacking was fatal to all chances of success. In the engagements between regular cruisers, not a single one was gained by superiority in courage. The crews of both the *Argus* and *Epervier* certainly flinched; but had they fought never so bravely they were too unskilful to win. The *Chesapeake's* crew could hardly be said to lack courage; it was more that they were inferior to their opponents in discipline as well as in skill.

There was but one conflict during the war where the victory could be said to be owing to superiority in pluck. This was when the *Neufchatel* privateer beat off the boats of the *Endymion*. The privateers-

men suffered a heavier proportional loss than their assailants, and they gained the victory by sheer ability to stand punishment.

For convenience in comparing them I give in tabulated form the force of the three British 38's taken by American 44's (allowing for short weight of metal of latter).

| | |
|---|---|
| CONSTITUTION | GUERRIERE |
| 30 long 24's, | 30 long 18's, |
| 2 long 24's, | 2 long 12's, |
| 22 short 32's, | 16 short 32's, |
| | 1 short 18. |
| Broadside, nominal, 736 lbs. | Broadside, 556 lbs. |
| real, 684 lbs. | |
| UNITED STATES, | MACEDONIAN |
| 30 long 24's, | 28 long 18's, |
| 2 long 24's, | 2 long 12's, |
| 22 short 42's, | 2 long 9's, |
| | 16 short 32's, |
| | 1 short 18 |
| Broadside, nominal, 846 lbs. | Broadside, 547 lbs. |
| real, 786 lbs. | |
| CONSTITUTION | JAVA |
| 30 long 24's, | 28 long 18's, |
| 2 long 24's, | 2 long 12's, |
| 20 short 32's. | 18 short 32's, |
| | 1 short 24. |
| Broadside, nominal, 704 lbs. | Broadside, 576 lbs. |
| real, 654 lbs. | |

The smallest line-of-battle ship, the 74, with only long 18's on the second deck, was armed as follows:

28 long 32's,
28 " 18's,
6 " 12's,
14 short 32's,
7 " 18's,

or a broadside of 1,032 lbs., 736 from long guns, 296 from carronades; while the *Constitution* threw

(in reality) 684 lbs., 356 from long guns, and 328 from her carronades, and the *United States* 102 lbs. more from her carronades. Remembering the difference between long guns and carronades, and considering sixteen of the 74's long 18's as being replaced by 42-pound carronades[86] (so as to get the metal on the ships distributed in similar proportions between the two styles of cannon), we get as the 74's broadside 502 lbs. from long guns, and 632 from carronades. The *United States* threw nominally 360 and 486, and the *Constitution* nominally 360 and 352: so the 74 was superior even to the former nominally about as three is to two; while the *Constitution*, if "a line-of-battle ship," was disguised to such a degree that she was in reality of but little more than *one half* the force of one of the smallest *true* liners England possessed!

[86] That this change would leave the force about as it was, can be gathered from the fact that the *Adams* and *John Adams*, both of which had been armed with 42-pound carronades (which were sent to Sackett's Harbor), had them replaced by long and medium 18-pounders, these being considered to be more formidable; so that the substitution of 42-pound carronnades would, if anything, reduce the force of the 74.

# CHAPTER III

## 1812

### ON THE OCEAN

Commodore Rodgers' cruise and unsuccessful chase of the *Belvidera*—Cruise of the *Essex*—Captain Hull's cruise, and escape from the squadron of Commodore Broke—*Constitution* captures *Guerrière*—*Wasp* captures *Frolic*—Second unsuccessful cruise of Commodore Rodgers—*United States* captures *Macedonian*—*Constitution* captures *Java*—*Essex* starts on a cruise—Summary

AT the time of the declaration of war, June 18, 1812, the American navy was but partially prepared for effective service. The *Wasp*, 18, was still at sea, on her return voyage from France; the *Constellation*, 38, was lying in the Chesapeake river unable to receive a crew for several months to come; the *Chesapeake*, 38, was lying in a similar condition in Boston harbor; the *Adams*, 28, was at Washington, being cut down and lengthened from a frigate into a corvette. These three cruisers were none of them fit to go to sea till after the end of the year. The *Essex*, 32, was in New York harbor, but, having some repairs to make, was not yet ready to put out. The *Constitution*, 44, was at Annapolis, without all of her stores, and engaged in shipping a new crew, the time of the old one being up. The

*Nautilus,* 14, was cruising off New Jersey, and the other small brigs were also off the coast. The only vessels immediately available were those under the command of Commodore Rodgers, at New York, consisting of his own ship, the *President,* 44, and of the *United States,* 44, Commodore Decatur, *Congress,* 38, Captain Smith, *Hornet,* 18, Captain Lawrence, and *Argus,* 16, Lieut. Sinclair. It seems marvelous that any nation should have permitted its ships to be so scattered and many of them in such an unfit condition, at the beginning of hostilities. The British vessels cruising off the coast were not at that time very numerous or formidable, consisting of the *Africa,* 64, *Acasta,* 40, *Shannon,* 38, *Guerrière,* 38, *Belvidera,* 36, *Æolus,* 32, *Southampton,* 32, and *Minerva,* 32, with a number of corvettes and sloops; their force was, however, strong enough to render it impossible for Commodore Rodgers to make any attempt on the coast towns of Canada or the West Indies. But the homeward bound plate fleet had sailed from Jamaica on May 20th, and was only protected by the *Thalia,* 36, Capt. Vashon, and *Reindeer,* 18, Capt. Manners. Its capture or destruction would have been a serious blow, and one which there seemed a good chance of striking, as the fleet would have to pass along the American coast, running with the Gulf Stream. Commodore Rodgers had made every preparation, in expectation of war being declared, and an hour after official intelligence of it, together with his instructions, had been received, his squadron put to

sea, on June 21st, and ran off toward the southeast[1] to get at the Jamaica ships. Having learned from an American brig that she had passed the plate fleet four days before in lat. 36° N., long. 67° W., the Commodore made all sail in that direction. At 6 A.M. on June 23d a sail was made out in the N.E., which proved to be the British frigate *Belvidera*, 36, Capt. Richard Byron.[2] The latter had sighted some of Commodore Rodgers' squadron some time before, and stood toward them, till at 6.30 she made out the three largest ships to be frigates. Having been informed of the likelihood of war by a New York pilot boat, the *Belvidera* now stood away, going N.E. by E., the wind being fresh from the west. The Americans made all sail in chase, the *President*, a very fast ship off the wind, leading, and the *Congress* coming next. At noon the *President* bore S.W., distant 2 3-4 miles from the *Belvidera*. Nantucket shoals bearing 100 miles N. and 48 miles E.[3] The wind grew lighter, shifting more toward the southwest, while the ships continued steadily in their course, going N.E. by E. As the *President* kept gaining, Captain Byron cleared his ship for action, and shifted to the stern ports two long eighteen-pounders on the main-deck and two thirty-two pound carronades on the quarter-deck.

[1] Letter of Commodore John Rodgers to the Secretary of the Navy, Sept. 1, 1812.

[2] Brenton, v, 46.

[3] Log of *Belvidera*, June 23, 1812.

At 4.30[4] the *President's* starboard forecastle bow-gun was fired by Commodore Rodgers himself; the corresponding main-deck gun was next discharged, and then Commodore Rodgers fired again. These three shots all struck the stern of the *Belvidera*, killing and wounding nine men,—one of them went through the rudder coat, into the after gun-room, the other two into the captain's cabin. A few more such shots would have rendered the *Belvidera's* capture certain, but when the *President's* main-deck gun was discharged for the second time it burst, blowing up the forecastle deck and killing and wounding 16 men, among them the Commodore himself, whose leg was broken. This saved the British frigate. Such an explosion always causes a half panic, every gun being at once suspected. In the midst of the confusion Captain Byron's stern-chasers opened with spirit and effect, killing or wounding six men more. Had the *President* still pushed steadily on, only using her bow-chasers until she closed abreast, which she could probably have done, the *Belvidera* could still have been taken; but, instead, the former now bore up and fired her port broadside, cutting her antagonist's rigging slightly, but doing no other damage, while the *Belvidera* kept up a brisk and galling fire, although the long bolts, breeching-hooks, and breechings of the guns now broke continually, wounding several of the men.

[4] Cooper, ii, 151. According to James, vi, 117, the *President* was then 600 yards distant from the *Belvidera*, half a point on her weather or port quarter.

including Captain Byron. The *President* had lost ground by yawing, but she soon regained it, and, coming up closer than before, again opened from her bow-chasers a well-directed fire, which severely wounded her opponent's main-top mast, cross-jack yard, and one or two other spars;[5] but shortly afterward she repeated her former tactics and again lost ground by yawing to discharge another broadside, even more ineffectual than the first. Once more she came up closer than ever, and once more yawed; the single shots from her bow-chasers doing considerable damage, but her raking broadsides none.[6] Meanwhile the active crew of the *Belvidera* repaired everything as fast as it was damaged, while under the superintendence of Lieutenants Sykes, Bruce, and Campbell, no less than 300 shot were fired from her stern guns.[7] Finding that if the *President* ceased yawing she could easily run alongside, Captain Byron cut away one bower, one stream, and two sheet anchors, the barge, yawl, gig, and jolly boat, and started 14 tons of water. The effect of this was at once apparent, and she began to gain, meanwhile the damage the sails of the combatants had received had enabled the *Congress* to close, and when abreast of his consort Captain Smith opened with his bow-chasers, but the shot fell short. The *Belvidera* soon altered her course to east by south, set her starboard

[5] James, vi, 119. He says the *President* was within 400 yards.

[6] Lord Howard Douglas, "Naval Gunnery," p. 419 (third edition).

[7] James, vi, 118.

studding-sails, and by midnight was out of danger; and three days afterward reached Halifax harbor.

Lord Howard Douglas' criticisms on this encounter seem very just. He says that the *President* opened very well with her bow-chasers (in fact the Americans seemed to have aimed better and to have done more execution with these guns than the British with their stern-chasers; but that she lost so much ground by yawing and delivering harmless broadsides as to enable her antagonist to escape. Certainly if it had not been for the time thus lost to no purpose, the Commodore would have run alongside his opponent, and the fate of the little 36 would have been sealed. On the other hand it must be remembered that it was only the bursting of the gun on board the *President*, causing such direful confusion and loss, and especially harmful in disabling her commander, that gave the *Belvidera* any chance of escape at all. At any rate, whether the American frigate does, or does not, deserve blame, Captain Byron and his crew do most emphatically deserve praise for the skill with which their guns were served and repairs made, the coolness with which measures to escape were adopted, and the courage with which they resisted so superior a force. On this occasion Captain Byron showed himself as good a seaman and as brave a man as he subsequently proved a humane and generous enemy when engaged in the blockade of the Chesapeake.[8]

[8] Even Niles, unscrupulously bitter as he is toward the British, does justice to the humanity of Captains Byron and

This was not a very auspicious opening of hostilities for America. The loss of the *Belvidera* was not the only thing to be regretted, for the distance the chase took the pursuers out of their course probably saved the plate fleet. When the *Belvidera* was first made out, Commodore Rodgers was in latitude 39° 26′ N., and longitude 71° 10′ W., at noon the same day the *Thalia* and her convoy were in latitude 39° N., longitude 62° W. Had they not chased the *Belvidera* the Americans would probably have run across the plate fleet.

The American squadron reached the western edge of the Newfoundland Banks on June 29th,[9] and on July 1st, a little to the east of the Banks, fell in with large quantities of cocoa-nut shells, orange peels, etc., which filled every one with great hopes of overtaking the quarry. On July 9th, the *Hornet* captured a British privateer, in latitude 45° 30′ N., and longitude 23° W., and her master reported that he had seen the Jamaica-men the previous evening; but nothing further was heard or seen of them, and on July 13th, being within twenty hours' sail of the English Channel, Commodore Rodgers reluctantly turned southward, reaching Madeira July 21st. Thence he cruised toward the Azores and by the Grand Banks home, there being considerable sickness on the ships. On August 31st he reached Boston after a very unfortunate cruise, in which he had

Hardy—which certainly shone in comparison to some of the rather buccaneering exploits of Cockburn's followers in Chesapeake Bay.

[9] Letter of Commodore Rodgers, Sept. 1st.

made but seven prizes, all merchantmen, and had recaptured one American vessel.

On July 3d the *Essex*, 32, Captain David Porter, put out of New York. As has been already explained she was most inefficiently armed, almost entirely with carronades. This placed her at the mercy of any frigate with long guns which could keep at a distance of a few hundred yards; but in spite of Captain Porter's petitions and remonstrances he was not allowed to change his armament. On the 11th of July at 2 A.M., latitude 33° N., longitude 66° W., the *Essex* fell in with the *Minerva*, 32, Captain Richard Hawkins, convoying seven transports, each containing about 200 troops, bound from Barbadoes to Quebec. The convoy was sailing in open order, and, there being a dull moon, the *Essex* ran in and cut out transport No. 299, with 197 soldiers aboard. Having taken out the soldiers, Captain Porter stood back to the convoy, expecting Captain Hawkins to come out and fight him; but this the latter would not do, keeping the convoy in close order around him. The transports were all armed and still contained in the aggregate 1,200 soldiers. As the *Essex* could only fight at close quarters these heavy odds rendered it hopeless for her to try to cut out the *Minerva*. Her carronades would have to be used at short range to be effective, and it would of course have been folly to run in right among the convoy, and expose herself to the certainty of being boarded by five times as many men as she possessed. The *Minerva* had three less guns a side,

and on her spar-deck carried 24-pound carronades instead of 32's, and, moreover, had fifty men less than the *Essex*, which had about 270 men this cruise; on the other hand, her main-deck was armed with long 12's, so that it is hard to say whether she did right or not in refusing to fight. She was of the same force as the *Southampton*, whose captain, Sir James Lucas Yeo, subsequently challenged Porter, but never appointed a meeting-place. In the event of a meeting, the advantage, in ships of such radically different armaments, would have been with that captain who succeeded in outmanœuvring the other and in making the fight come off at the distance best suited to himself. At long range either the *Minerva* or *Southampton* would possess an immense superiority; but if Porter could have contrived to run up within a couple of hundred yards, or still better, to board, his superiority in weight of metal and number of men would have enabled him to carry either of them. Porter's crew was better trained for boarding than almost any other American commander's; and probably none of the British frigates on the American station, except the *Shannon* and *Tenedos*, would have stood a chance with the *Essex* in a hand-to-hand struggle. Among her youngest midshipmen was one, by name David Glasgow Farragut, then but thirteen years old, who afterward became the first and greatest admiral of the United States. His own words on this point will be read with interest. "Every day," he says,[10] "the

[10] "Life of Farragut" (embodying his journal and letters), p. 31. By his son, Loyall Farragut, New York, 1879.

crew were exercised at the great guns, small arms, and single stick. And I may here mention the fact that I have never been on a ship where the crew of the old *Essex* was represented but that I found them to be the best swordsmen on board. They had been so thoroughly trained as boarders that every man was prepared for such an emergency, with his cutlass as sharp as a razor, a dirk made by the ship's armorer out of a file, and a pistol." [11]

On August 13th a sail was made out to windward, which proved to be the British ship-sloop *Alert*, 16, Captain T. L. O. Laugharne, carrying 20 eighteen-pound carronades and 100 men.[12] As soon

[11] James says: "Had Captain Porter really endeavored to bring the *Minerva* to action we do not see what could have prevented the *Essex*, with her superiority of sailing, from coming alongside of her. But no such thought, we are sure, entered into Captain Porter's head." What "prevented the *Essex*" was the *Minerva's* not venturing out of the convoy. Farragut, in his journal, writes. "The captured British officers were very anxious for us to have a fight with the *Minerva*, as they considered her a good match for the *Essex*, and Captain Porter replied that he should gratify them with pleasure if His Majesty's commander was of their taste. So we stood toward the convoy, and when within gunshot hove to and awaited the *Minerva*, but she tacked and stood in among the convoy, to the utter amazement of our prisoners, who denounced the commander as a base coward, and expressed their determination to report him to the Admiralty." An incident of reported "flinching" like this is not worth mentioning; I allude to it only to show the value of James' sneers.

[12] James (History, vi, p. 128) says "86 men." In the Naval Archives at Washington in the "Captains' Letters" for 1812 (vol. ii, No. 182) can be found inclosed in Porter's letter the parole of the officers and crew of the *Alert* signed

as the *Essex* discovered the *Alert* she put out drags astern, and led the enemy to believe she was trying to escape by sending a few men aloft to shake out the reefs and make sail. Concluding the frigate to be a merchantman, the *Alert* bore down on her; while the Americans went to quarters and cleared for action, although the tompions were left in the guns, and the ports kept closed.[13] The *Alert* fired a gun and the *Essex* hove to, when the former passed under her stern, and when on her lee quarter poured in a broadside of grape and canister; but the sloop was so far abaft the frigate's beam that her shot did not enter the ports and caused no damage. Thereupon Porter put up his helm and opened as soon as his guns would bear, tompions and all. The *Alert* now discovered her error and made off, but too late, for in eight minutes the *Essex* was alongside, and the *Alert* fired a musket and struck, three men being wounded and several feet of water in the hold. She was disarmed and sent as a cartel into St. Johns. It has been the fashion among American writers to speak of her as if she were "unworthily" given up, but such an accusation is entirely groundless. The *Essex* was four times her force, and all that could possibly be expected of her was to do as she did—exchange broadsides and strike, having suffered some loss and damage. The

by Captain Laugharne; it contains either 100 or 101 names of the crew of the *Alert*, besides those of a number of other prisoners sent back in the same cartel.

[13] "Life of Farragut," p. 16.

*Essex* returned to New York on September 7th, having made 10 prizes, containing 423 men.[14]

The *Belvidera,* as has been stated, carried the news of the war to Halifax. On July 5th Vice-Admiral Sawyer despatched a squadron to cruise against the United States, commanded by Philip Vere Broke, of the *Shannon,* 38, having under him the *Belvidera,* 36, Captain Richard Byron, *Africa,* 64, Captain John Bastard, and *Æolus,* 32, Captain Lord James Townsend. On the 9th, while off Nantucket, they were joined by the *Guerrière,* 38, Captain James Richard Dacres. On the 16th the squadron fell in with and captured the United States brig *Nautilus,* 14, Lieutenant Crane, which, like all the little brigs, was overloaded with guns and men. She threw her lee guns overboard and made use of every expedient to escape, but to no purpose. At 3 P.M. of the following day, when the British ships were abreast of Barnegat, about four leagues off shore, a strange sail was seen and immediately chased, in the south by east, or windward quarter, standing to the northeast. This was the United States frigate

[14] Before entering New York the *Essex* fell in with a British force which, in both Porter's and Farragut's works, is said to have been composed of the *Acasta* and *Shannon,* each of fifty guns, and *Ringdove,* of twenty. James says it was the *Shannon,* accompanied by a merchant vessel. It is not a point of much importance, as nothing came of the meeting, and the *Shannon* alone, with her immensely superior armament, ought to have been a match twice over for the *Essex;* although, if James is right, as seems probable, it gives rather a comical turn to Porter's account of his "extraordinary escape."

*Constitution*, 44, Captain Isaac Hull.[15] When the war broke out he was in the Chesapeake River getting a new crew aboard. Having shipped over 450 men (counting officers), he put out of harbor on the 12th of July. His crew was entirely new, drafts of men coming on board up to the last moment.[16] On the 17th, at 2 P.M., Hull discovered four sail, in the northern board, heading to the westward. At 3, the wind being very light, the *Constitution* made sail and tacked, in 18½ fathoms. At 4, in the N.E., a fifth sail appeared, which afterward proved to be the *Guerrière*. The first four ships bore N.N.W., and were all on the starboard tack; while by 6 o'clock the fifth bore E.N.E. At 6.15 the wind shifted and blew lightly from the south, bringing the American ship to windward. She then wore round with her head to the eastward, set her light studding-sails and stay-sails, and at 7.30 beat to action, intending to speak the nearest vessel, the *Guerrière*. The two frigates neared one another gradually and at 10 the *Constitution* began making signals, which she continued for over an hour. At

[15] For the ensuing chase I have relied mainly on Cooper; see also "Memoir of Admiral Broke," p. 240; James, vi, 133; and Marshall's "Naval Biography" (London, 1825), ii, 625.

[16] In a letter to the Secretary of the Navy ("Captains' Letters," 1812, ii, No. 85), Hull, after speaking of the way his men were arriving, says: "The crew are as yet unacquainted with a ship of war, as many have but lately joined and have never been on an armed ship before. . . . We are doing all that we can to make them acquainted with their duty, and in a few days we shall have nothing to fear from any single decked ship."

3.30 A.M. on the 18th the *Guerrière,* going gradually toward the *Constitution* on the port tack, and but one half mile distant, discovered on her lee beam the *Belvidera* and the other British vessels, and signalled to them. They did not answer the signals, thinking she must know who they were—a circumstance which afterward gave rise to sharp recriminations among the captains—and Dacres, concluding them to be Commodore Rodgers' squadron, tacked, and then wore round and stood away from the *Constitution* for some time before discovering his mistake.

At 5 A.M. Hull had just enough steerage way on to keep his head to the east, on the starboard tack; on his lee quarter, bearing N.E. by N., were the *Belvidera* and *Guerrière* and astern the *Shannon, Æolus,* and *Africa.* At 5.30 it fell entirely calm, and Hull put out his boats to tow the ship, always going southward. At the same time he whipped up a 24 from the main-deck, and got the forecastle-chaser aft, cutting away the taffrail to give the two guns more freedom to work in and also running out, through the cabin windows, two of the long main-deck 24's. The British boats were towing also. At 6 A.M. a light breeze sprang up, and the *Constitution* set studding-sails and stay-sails; the *Shannon* opened at her with her bow guns, but ceased when she found she could not reach her. At 6.30, the wind having died away, the *Shannon* began to gain, almost all the boats of the squadron towing her. Having sounded in 26 fathoms, Lieu-

tenant Charles Morris suggested to Hull to try kedging. All the spare rope was bent on to the cables, paid out into the cutters, and a kedge run out half a mile ahead and let go; then the crew clapped on and walked away with the ship, overrunning and tripping the kedge as she came up with the end of the line. Meanwhile, fresh lines and another kedge were carried ahead, and the frigate glided away from her pursuers. At 7.30 A.M. a little breeze sprang up, when the *Constitution* set her ensign and fired a shot at the *Shannon*. It soon fell calm again and the *Shannon* neared. At 9.10 a light air from the southward struck the ship, bringing her to windward. As the breeze was seen coming, her sails were trimmed, and as soon as she obeyed her helm she was brought close up on the port tack. The boats dropped alongside; those that belonged to the davits were run up, while the others were just lifted clear of the water, by purchases on the spare spars, stowed outboard, where they could be used again at a minute's notice. Meanwhile, on her lee beam the *Guerrière* opened fire; but her shot fell short, and the Americans paid not the slightest heed to it. Soon it again fell calm, when Hull had 2,000 gallons of water started, and again put out his boats to tow. The *Shannon*, with some of the other boats of the squadron helping her, gained on the *Constitution*, but by severe exertion was again left behind. Shortly afterward, a slight wind springing up, the *Belvidera* gained on the other British ships, and when it fell calm she was nearer to the *Con-*

*stitution* than any of her consorts, their boats being put on to her.[17] At 10.30, observing the benefit that the *Constitution* had derived from warping, Captain Byron did the same, bending all his hawsers to one another, and working two kedge anchors at the same time by paying the warp out through one hawse-hole as it was run in through the other opposite. Having men from the other frigates aboard, and a lighter ship to work, Captain Byron, at 2 P.M., was near enough to exchange bow and stern-chasers with the *Constitution*, out of range however. Hull expected to be overtaken, and made every arrangement to try in such case to disable the first frigate before her consorts could close. But neither the *Belvidera* nor the *Shannon* dared to tow very near for fear of having their boats sunk by the American's stern-chasers.

The *Constitution's* crew showed the most excellent spirit. Officers and men relieved each other regularly, the former snatching their rest any where on deck, the latter sleeping at the guns. Gradually the *Constitution* drew ahead, but the situation continued most critical. All through the afternoon the British frigates kept towing and kedging, being barely out of gunshot. At 3 P.M. a light breeze sprung up, and blew fitfully at intervals; every puff

[17] Cooper speaks as if this was the *Shannon*; but from Marshall's "Naval Biography" we learn that it was the *Belvidera*. At other times he confuses the *Belvidera* with the *Guerrière*. Captain Hull, of course, could not accurately distinguish the names of his pursuers. My account is drawn from a careful comparison of Marshall, Cooper, and James.

was watched closely and taken advantage of to the utmost. At 7 in the evening the wind almost died out, and for four more weary hours the worn-out sailors towed and kedged. At 10.45 a little breeze struck the frigate, when the boats dropped alongside and were hoisted up, excepting the first cutter. Throughout the night the wind continued very light, the *Belvidera* forging ahead till she was off the *Constitution's* lee beam; and at 4 A.M. on the morning of the 19th, she tacked to the eastward, the breeze being light from the south by east. At 4.20 the *Constitution* tacked also; and at 5.15 the *Æolus*, which had drawn ahead, passed on the contrary tack. Soon afterward the wind freshened so that Captain Hull took in his cutter. The *Africa* was now so far to leeward as to be almost out of the race; while the five frigates were all running on the starboard tack with every stitch of canvas set. At 9 A.M. an American merchantman hove in sight and bore down toward the squadron. The *Belvidera*, by way of decoy, hoisted American colors, when the *Constitution* hoisted the British flag, and the merchant vessel hauled off. The breeze continued light till noon, when Hull found he had dropped the British frigates well behind; the nearest was the *Belvidera*, exactly in his wake, bearing W.N.W. 2½ miles distant. The *Shannon* was on his lee, bearing N. by W. ½ W. distant 3½ miles. The other two frigates were five miles off on the lee quarter. Soon afterward the breeze freshened, and "Old Ironsides" drew slowly ahead from her foes, her sails being watched

and tended with the most consummate skill. At 4 P.M. the breeze again lightened, but even the *Belvidera* was now four miles astern and to leeward. At 6.45 there were indications of a heavy rain squall, which once more permitted Hull to show that in seamanship he excelled even the able captains against whom he was pitted. The crew were stationed and everything kept fast till the last minute, when all was clewed up just before the squall struck the ship. The light canvas was furled, a second reef taken in the mizzen topsail, and the ship almost instantly brought under short sail. The British vessels seeing this began to let go and haul down without waiting for the wind, and were steering on different tacks when the first gust struck them. But Hull as soon as he got the weight of the wind sheeted home, hoisted his fore and maintop gallant sails, and went off on an easy bowline at the rate of 11 knots. At 7.40 sight was again obtained of the enemy, the squall having passed to leeward; the *Belvidera,* the nearest vessel, had altered her bearings two points to leeward, and was a long way astern. Next came the *Shannon;* the *Guerrière* and *Æolus* were hull down, and the *Africa* barely visible. The wind now kept light, shifting occasionally in a very baffling manner, but the *Constitution* gained steadily, wetting her sails from the sky-sails to the courses. At 6 A.M. on the morning of the 20th the pursuers were almost out of sight; and at 8.15 A.M. they abandoned the chase. Hull at once stopped to investigate the character of two strange vessels, but found

them to be only Americans; then, at midday, he stood toward the east, and went into Boston on July 26th.

In this chase Captain Isaac Hull was matched against five British captains, two of whom, Broke and Byron, were fully equal to any in their navy; and while the latter showed great perseverance, good seamanship, and ready imitation, there can be no doubt that the palm in every way belongs to the cool old Yankee. Every daring expedient known to the most perfect seamanship was tried, and tried with success; and no victorious fight could reflect more credit on the part of the conqueror than this three days' chase did on Hull. Later, on two occasions, the *Constitution* proved herself far superior in gunnery to the average British frigate; this time her officers and men showed that they could handle the sails as well as they could the guns. Hull outmanœuvred Broke and Byron as cleverly as a month later he out-fought Dacres. His successful escape and victorious fight were both performed in a way that place him above any single ship captain of the war.

On August 2d the *Constitution* made sail from Boston[18] and stood to the eastward, in hopes of falling in with some of the British cruisers. She was unsuccessful, however, and met nothing. Then she ran down to the Bay of Fundy, steered along the coast of Nova Scotia, and thence toward Newfoundland, and finally took her station off Cape Race in

[18] Letter of Capt. Isaac Hull, Aug. 28, 1812.

the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where she took and burned two brigs of little value. On the 15th she recaptured an American brig from the British ship-sloop *Avenger,* though the latter escaped; Capt. Hull manned his prize and sent her in. He then sailed southward, and on the night of the 18th spoke a Salem privateer which gave him news of a British frigate to the south; thither he stood, and at 2 P.M. on the 19th, in lat. 41° 30′ N. and 55° W., made out a large sail bearing E.S.E. and to leeward,[19] which proved to be his old acquaintance, the frigate *Guerrière,* Captain Dacres. It was a cloudy day and the wind was blowing fresh from the northwest. The *Guerrière* was standing by the wind on the starboard tack, under easy canvas;[20] she hauled up her courses, took in her topgallant sails, and at 4.30 backed her maintopsail. Hull then very deliberately began to shorten sail, taking in topgallant sails, staysails, and flying-jib, sending down the royal yards and putting another reef in the topsails. Soon the Englishman hoisted three ensigns, when the American also set his colors, one at each masthead, and one at the mizzen peak.

The *Constitution* now ran down with the wind nearly aft. The *Guerrière* was on the starboard tack, and at five o'clock opened with her weather-guns,[21] the shot falling short, then wore round and fired her port broadside, of which two shots struck

[19] Do., Aug. 30th.
[20] Letter of Capt. James R. Dacres, Sept. 7, 1812.
[21] Log of *Guerrière.*

her opponent, the rest passing over and through her rigging.[22] As the British frigate again wore to open with her starboard battery, the *Constitution* yawed a little and fired two or three of her port bow guns. Three or four times the *Guerrière* repeated this manœuvre, wearing and firing alternate broadsides, but with little or no effect, while the *Constitution* yawed as often to avoid being raked, and occasionally fired one of her bow guns. This continued nearly an hour, as the vessels were very far apart when the action began, hardly any loss or damage being inflicted by either party. At 6.00 the *Guerrière* bore up and ran off under her topsails and jib, with the wind almost astern, a little on her port quarter; when the *Constitution* set her maintop gallant sail and foresail, and at 6.05 closed within half pistol-shot distance on her adversary's port beam.[23] Immediately a furious cannonade opened, each ship firing as the guns bore. By the time the ships were fairly abreast, at 6.20, the *Constitution* shot away the *Guerrière's* mizzenmast, which fell over the starboard quarter, knocking a large hole in

[22] See in the Naval Archives (Bureau of Navigation) the *Constitution's* Log-Book (vol. ii, from Feb. 1, 1812, to Dec. 13, 1813). The point is of some little importance because Hull, in his letter, speaks as if *both* the first broadsides fell short, whereas the log distinctly says that the second went over the ship, except two shot, which came home. The hypothesis of the *Guerrière* having damaged powder was founded purely on this supposed falling short of the first two broadsides.

[23] "Autobiography of Commodore Morris" (Annapolis, 1880), p. 164.

the counter, and bringing the ship round against her helm. Hitherto she had suffered very greatly and the *Constitution* hardly at all. The latter, finding that she was ranging ahead, put her helm a-port and then luffed short round her enemy's bows,[24] delivering a heavy raking fire with the starboard guns and shooting away the *Guerrière's* mainyard. Then she wore and again passed her adversary's bows, raking with her port guns. The mizzenmast of the *Guerrière*, dragging in the water, had by this time pulled her bow round till the wind came on her starboard quarter; and so near were the two ships that the Englishman's bowsprit passed diagonally over the *Constitution's* quarterdeck, and as the latter ship fell off it got foul of her mizzen-rigging, and the vessels then lay with the *Guerrière's* starboard-bow against the *Constitution's* port, or lee quarter-gallery.[25] The Englishman's bow guns played havoc with Captain Hull's cabin, setting fire to it; but the flames were soon extinguished by Lieutenant Hoffmann. On both sides the boarders were called away; the British ran forward, but Captain Dacres relinquished the idea of attacking[26] when he saw the crowds of men on the American's decks. Meanwhile, on the *Constitution*, the boarders and marines gathered aft, but such a heavy sea was running that they could not get on the *Guerrière*. Both sides suffered heavily from the closeness of the musketry

[24] Log of *Constitution*.

[25] Cooper, in "Putnam's Magazine," i, 475.

[26] Address of Captain Dacres to the court-martial at Halifax.

fire; indeed, almost the entire loss on the *Constitution* occurred at this juncture. As Lieutenant Bush, of the marines, sprang upon the taffrail to leap on the enemy's decks, a British marine shot him dead; Mr. Morris, the first lieutenant, and Mr. Alwyn, the master, had also both leaped on the taffrail, and both were at the same moment wounded by the musketry fire. On the *Guerrière* the loss was far heavier, almost all the men on the forecastle being picked off. Captain Dacres himself was shot in the back and severely wounded by one of the American mizzen topmen, while he was standing on the starboard forecastle hammocks cheering on his crew;[27] two of the lieutenants and the master were also shot down. The ships gradually worked round till the wind was again on the port quarter, when they separated, and the *Guerrière's* foremast and mainmast at once went by the board, and fell over on the starboard side, leaving her a defenceless hulk, rolling her main-deck guns into the water.[28] At 6.30 the *Constitution* hauled aboard her tacks, ran off a little distance to the eastward, and lay to. Her braces and standing and running rigging were much cut up and some of the spars wounded, but a few minutes sufficed to repair damages, when Captain Hull stood under his adversary's lee, and the latter at once struck, at 7.00 P.M.,[29] just two hours after she had fired the first shot. On the part of the *Constitution*, however, the actual fighting, exclusive of six or

[27] James, vi, 144. [28] Brenton, v, 51.
[29] Log of the *Constitution*.

eight guns fired during the first hour, while closing, occupied less than 30 minutes.

The tonnage and metal of the combatants have already been referred to. The *Constitution* had, as already said, about 456 men aboard, while of the *Guerrière's* crew, 267 prisoners were received aboard the *Constitution;* deducting 10 who were Americans and would not fight, and adding the 15 killed outright, we get 272; 28 men were absent in prizes.

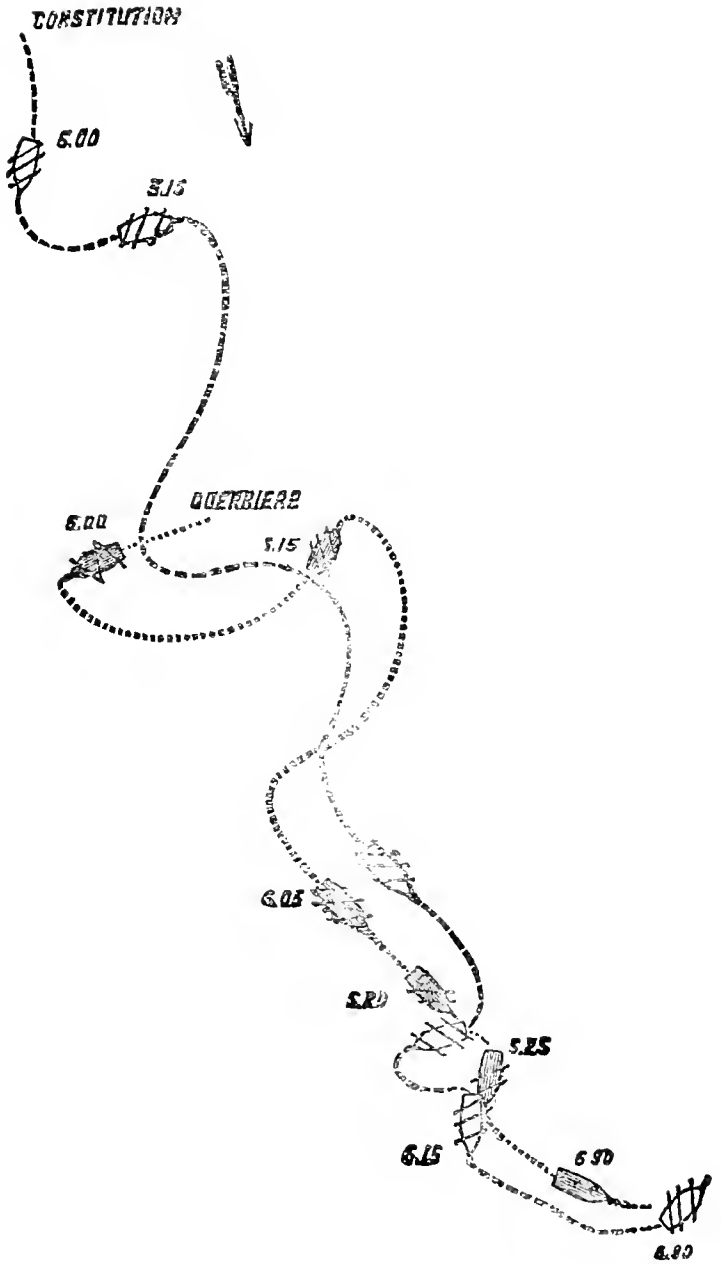
COMPARATIVE FORCE

| | Tons | Guns | Broadside | Men | Loss | Comparative Force | Comparative loss Inflicted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Constitution* | 1576 | 27 | 684 | 456 | 14 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| *Guerriere* | 1338 | 25 | 556 | 272 | 79 | .70 | .18 |

The loss of the *Constitution* included Lieutenant William S. Bush, of the marines, and six seamen killed, and her first lieutenant, Charles Morris, master John C. Alwyn, four seamen, and one marine, wounded. Total, seven killed and seven wounded. Almost all this loss occurred when the ships came foul, and was due to the *Guerrière's* musketry and the two guns in her bridle-ports.

The *Guerrière* lost 23 killed and mortally wounded, including her second lieutenant, Henry Ready, and 56 wounded severely and slightly, including Captain Dacres himself, the first lieutenant, Bartholomew Kent, master Robert Scott, two master's mates, and one midshipman.

The third lieutenant of the *Constitution*, Mr. George Campbell Read, was sent on board the prize, and the *Constitution* remained by her during the




This diagram is taken from Commodore Morris' autobiography and the log of the *Guerriere;* the official accounts apparently consider "larboard" and "starboard" as interchangeable terms.

night; but at daylight it was found that she was in danger of sinking. Captain Hull at once began removing the prisoners, and at three o'clock in the afternoon set the *Guerrière* on fire, and in a quarter of an hour she blew up. He then set sail for Boston, where he arrived on August 30th. "Captain Hull and his officers," writes Captain Dacres in his official letter, "have treated us like brave and generous enemies; the greatest care has been taken that we should not lose the smallest trifle."

The British laid very great stress on the rotten and decayed condition of the *Guerrière;* mentioning in particular that the mainmast fell solely because of the weight of the falling foremast. But it must be remembered that until the action occurred she was considered a very fine ship. Thus, in Brighton's "Memoir of Admiral Broke," it is declared that Dacres freely expressed the opinion that she could take a ship in half the time the *Shannon* could. The fall of the mainmast occurred when the fight was practically over; it had no influence whatever on the conflict. It was also asserted that her powder was bad, but on no authority; her first broadside fell short, but so, under similar circumstances, did the first broadside of the *United States.* None of these causes accounts for the fact that her shot did not hit. Her opponent was of such superior force—nearly in the proportion of 3 to 2—that success would have been very difficult in any event, and no one can doubt the gallantry and pluck with which the British ship was fought; but the execution was very

greatly disproportioned to the force. The gunnery of the *Guerrière* was very poor, and that of the *Constitution* excellent; during the few minutes the ships were yardarm and yardarm, the latter was not hulled once, while no less than 30 shot took effect on the former's engaged side,[30] five sheets of copper beneath the bends. The *Guerrière*, moreover, was out-manœuvred; "in wearing several times and exchanging broadsides in such rapid and continual changes of position, her fire was much more harmless than it would have been if she had kept more steady."[31] The *Constitution* was handled faultlessly; Captain Hull displayed the coolness and skill of a veteran in the way in which he managed, first to avoid being raked, and then to improve the advantage which the precision and rapidity of his fire had gained. "After making every allowance claimed by the enemy, the character of this victory is not essentially altered. Its peculiarities were a fine display of seamanship in the approach, extraordinary efficiency in the attack, and great readiness in repairing damages; all of which denote cool and capable officers, with an expert and trained crew; in a word, a disciplined man-of-war."[32] The disparity of force, 10 to 7, is not enough to account for the disparity of execution, 10 to 2. Of course, something must be allowed for the decayed state of the Englishman's masts, although I really do not think

[30] Captain Dacres' address to the court-martial.

[31] Lord Howard Douglas' "Treatise on Naval Gunnery" (London, 1851), p. 454.

[32] Cooper, ii, 173.

it had any influence on the battle, for he was beaten when the mainmast fell; and it must be remembered, on the other hand, that the American crew was absolutely new, while the *Guerrière* was manned by old hands. So that, while admitting and admiring the gallantry, and, on the whole, the seamanship, of Captain Dacres and his crew, and acknowledging that he fought at a great disadvantage, especially in being short-handed, yet all must acknowledge that the combat showed a marked superiority, particularly in gunnery, on the part of the Americans. Had the ships not come foul, Captain Hull would probably not have lost more than three or four men; as it was, he suffered but slightly. That the *Guerrière* was not so weak as she was represented to be can be gathered from the fact that she mounted two more maindeck guns than the rest of her class; thus carrying on her maindeck 30 long 18-pounders in battery to oppose to the 30 long 24's, or rather (allowing for the short weight of shot) long 22's, of the *Constitution*. Characteristically enough, James, though he carefully reckons in the long bow-chasers in the bridle-ports of the *Argus* and *Enterprise*, yet refuses to count the two long eighteens mounted through the bridle-ports on the *Guerrière's* maindeck. Now, as it turned out, these two bow guns were used very effectively, when the ships got foul, and caused more damage and loss than all of the other maindeck guns put together.

Captain Dacres, very much to his credit, allowed the ten Americans on board to go below, so as not

to fight against their flag; and in his address to the court-martial mentions, among the reasons for his defeat, "that he was very much weakened by permitting the Americans on board to quit their quarters." Coupling this with the assertion made by James and most other British writers that the *Constitution* was largely manned by Englishmen, we reach the somewhat remarkable conclusion, that the British ship was defeated because the Americans on board would *not* fight against their country, and that the American was victorious because the British on board *would*. However, as I have shown, in reality there were probably not a score of British on board the *Constitution*.

In this, as well as the two succeeding frigate actions, every one must admit that there was a great superiority in force on the side of the victors, and British historians have insisted that this superiority was so great as to preclude any hopes of a successful resistance. That this was not true, and that the disparity between the combatants was not as great as had been the case in a number of encounters in which English frigates had taken French ones, can be best shown by a few accounts taken from the French historian Troude, who would certainly not exaggerate the difference. Thus on March 1, 1799, the English 38-gun 18-pounder frigate *Sybil*, captured the French 44-gun 24-pounder frigate *Forte*, after an action of two hours and ten minutes.[33] In

[33] "Batailles Navales de la France." O. Troude (Paris, 1868), iv, 171.

*actual* weight the shot thrown by one of the main-deck guns of the defeated *Forte* was over six pounds heavier than the shot thrown by one of the main-deck guns of the victorious *Constitution* or *United States.*[34]

There are later examples than this. But a very few years before the declaration of war by the United States, and in the same struggle that was then still raging, there had been at least two victories gained by English frigates over French foes as superior to themselves as the American 44's were to the British ships they captured. On Aug. 10, 1805, the *Phœnix,* 36, captured the *Didon,* 40, after 3½ hours' fighting, the comparative broadside force being:[35]

| PHŒNIX | DIDON |
|---|---|
| 13×18 | 14×18 |
| 2× 9 | 2× 8 |
| 6×32 | 7×36 |
| 21 guns, 444 lbs. | 23 guns, 522 lbs. (nominal; about 600, real) |

On March 8, 1808, the *San Florenzo,* 36, captured the *Piédmontaise,* 40, the force being exactly what it was in the case of the *Phœnix* and *Didon.*[36] Comparing the real, not the nominal, weight of metal, we find that the *Didon* and *Piédmontaise* were proportionately of greater force compared to the *Phœnix* and *San Florenzo,* than the *Constitution* was compared to the *Guerrière* or *Java.* The

[34] See Appendix B, for actual weight of French shot.

[35] Ibid, iii, 425.

[36] "Batailles Navales de la France," iii, 199.

French 18's threw each a shot weighing but about two pounds less than that thrown by an American 24 of 1812, while their 36-pound carronades each threw a shot over 10 pounds heavier than that thrown by one of the *Constitution's* spar-deck 32's.

That a 24-pounder cannot always whip an 18-pounder frigate is shown by the action of the British frigate *Eurotas* with the French frigate *Chloride*, on Feb. 25, 1814.[37] The first with a crew of 329 men threw 625 pounds of shot at a broadside, the latter carrying 344 men and throwing 463 pounds; yet the result was indecisive. The French lost 90 and the British 60 men. The action showed that heavy metal was not of much use unless used well.

To appreciate rightly the exultation Hull's victory caused in the United States, and the intense annoyance it created in England, it must be remembered that during the past twenty years the Island Power had been at war with almost every State in Europe, at one time or another, and in the course of about two hundred single conflicts between ships of approximately equal force (that is, where the difference was less than one-half), waged against French, Spanish, Italian, Turkish, Algerine, Russian, Danish, and Dutch antagonists, her ships had been beaten and captured in but five instances. Then war broke out with America, and in eight months five single-ship actions occurred, in every one of which the British vessel was captured.

[37] James, vi, 391.

Even had the victories been due solely to superior force this would have been no mean triumph for the United States.

On October 13, 1812, the American 18-gun ship sloop *Wasp*, Captain Jacob Jones, with 137 men aboard, sailed from the Delaware and ran off south-east to get into the track of the West India vessels; on the 16th a heavy gale began to blow, causing the loss of the jib-boom and two men who were on it. The next day the weather moderated somewhat, and at 11.30 P.M., in latitude 37° N., longitude 65° W., several sail were descried.[38] These were part of a convoy of 14 merchantmen which had quitted the bay of Honduras on September 12th, bound for England,[39] under the convoy of the British 18-gun brig-sloop *Frolic*, of 19 guns and 110 men, Captain Thomas Whinyates. They had been dispersed by the gale of the 16th, during which the *Frolic's* main-yard was carried away and both her top-sails torn to pieces;[40] next day she spent in repairing damages, and by dark six of the missing ships had joined her. The day broke almost cloudless on the 18th (Sunday), showing the convoy, ahead and to leeward of the American ship, still some distance off, as Captain Jones had not thought it prudent to close during the night, while he was ignorant of the force of his antagonists. The *Wasp* now sent down her top-gallant yards, close reefed

[38] Capt. Jones' official letter, Nov. 24, 1812.
[39] James' History, vi, 158.
[40] Capt. Whinyates' official letter, Oct. 18, 1812.

her top-sails, and bore down under short fighting canvas; while the *Frolic* removed her main-yard from the casks, lashed it on deck, and then hauled to the wind under her boom main-sail and close-reefed foretopsail, hoisting Spanish colors to decoy the stranger under her guns, and permit the convoy to escape. At 11.32 the action began—the two ships running parallel on the starboard tack, not 60 yards apart, the *Wasp* firing her port, and the *Frolic* her starboard guns. The latter fired very rapidly, delivering three broadsides to the *Wasp's* two,[41] both crews cheering loudly as the ships wallowed through the water. There was a very heavy sea running, which caused the vessels to pitch and roll heavily. The Americans fired as the engaged side of their ship was going down, aiming at their opponent's hull;[42] while the British delivered their broadsides while on the crests of the seas, the shot going high. The water dashed in clouds of spray over both crews, and the vessels rolled so that the muzzles of the guns went under.[43] But in spite of the rough weather, the firing was not only spirited but well directed. At 11.36 the *Wasp's* maintop-mast was shot away and fell, with its yard, across the port fore and foretop-sail braces, rendering the head yards unmanageable; at 11.46 the gaff and mizzentop-gallant mast came down, and by 11.52 every brace and most of the rigging was shot away.[44] It would now have been very difficult to brace any

[41] Cooper, 182.
[42] Niles' Register, iii, p. 324.
[43] Do.
[44] Capt. Jones' letter.

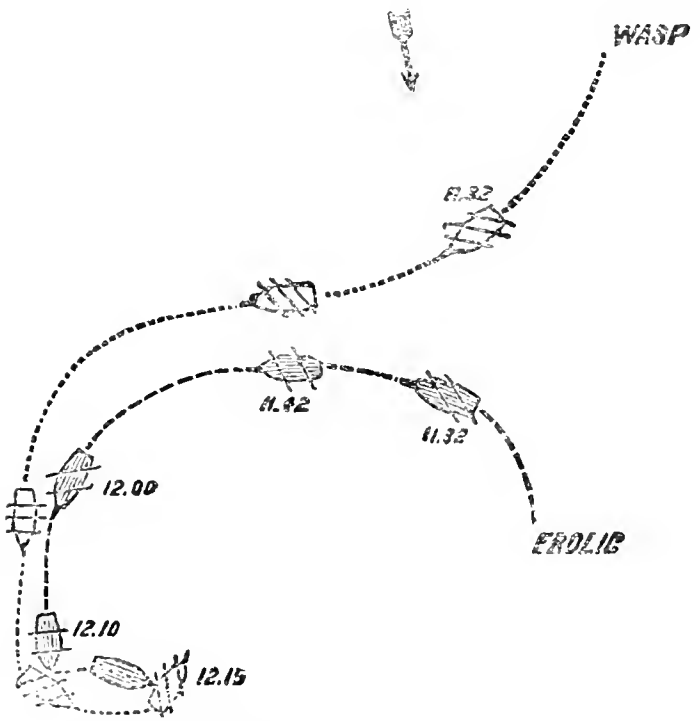
of the yards. But meanwhile the *Frolic* suffered dreadfully in her hull and lower masts, and had her gaff and head braces shot away.[45] The slaughter among her crew was very great, but the survivors kept at their work with the dogged courage of their race. At first the two vessels ran side by side, but the American gradually forged ahead, throwing in her fire from a position in which she herself received little injury; by degrees the vessels got so close that the Americans struck the *Frolic's* side with their rammers in loading,[46] and the British brig was raked with dreadful effect. The *Frolic* then fell aboard her antagonist, her jib-boom coming in between the main and mizzen-rigging of the *Wasp* and passing over the heads of Captain Jones and Lieutenant Biddle, who were standing near the capstan. This forced the *Wasp* up in the wind, and she again raked her antagonist, Captain Jones trying to restrain his men from boarding till he could put in another broadside. But they could no longer be held back, and Jack Lang, a New Jersey seaman, leaped on the *Frolic's* bowsprit. Lieutenant Biddle then mounted on the hammock cloth to board, but his feet got entangled in the rigging, and one of the midshipmen seizing his coat-tails to help himself up, the lieutenant tumbled back on the deck. At the next swell he succeeded in getting on the bowsprit, on which there were already two seamen whom he passed on the forecastle. But there was no one to oppose him: not

[45] Capt. Whinyates' letter.

[46] Capt. Jones' letter.

twenty Englishmen were left unhurt.[47] The man at the wheel was still at his post, grim and undaunted, and two or three more were on deck, including Captain Whinyates and Lieutenant Wintle, both so severely wounded that they could not stand without support.[48] There could be no more resistance, and Lieutenant Biddle lowered the flag at 12.15—just 43 minutes after the beginning of the fight.[49] A minute or two afterward both the *Frolic's* masts

DIAGRAM[50]




[47] Capt. Whinyates' letter. [48] James, vi, 161.

[49] Capt. Jones' letter.

[50] It is difficult to reconcile the accounts of the manœuvres in this action. James says "larboard" where Cooper says "starboard"; one says the *Wasp* wore, the other says that she could not do so, etc.

went by the board—the foremast about fifteen feet above the deck, the other short off. Of her crew, as already said, not twenty men had escaped unhurt. Every officer was wounded; two of them, the first lieutenant, Charles McKay, and master, John Stephens, soon died. Her total loss was thus over 90;[51] about 30 of whom were killed outright or died later. The *Wasp* suffered very severely in her rigging and aloft generally, but only two or three shots struck her hull; five of her men were killed—two in her mizzen-top and one in her maintop-mast rigging—and five wounded, chiefly while aloft.

The two vessels were practically of equal force. The loss of the *Frolic's* main-yard had merely converted her into a brigantine, and, as the roughness of the sea made it necessary to fight under very short canvas, her inferiority in men was fully compensated for by her superiority in metal. She had been desperately defended; no men could have fought more bravely than Captain Whinyates and his crew. On the other hand, the Americans had done their work with a coolness and skill that could not be surpassed; the contest had been mainly one of gunnery, and had been decided by the greatly superior judgment and accuracy with which they fired. Both officers and crew had behaved well; Captain Jones particularly mentions Lieutenant Claxton, who, though too ill to be of any service,

[51] Capt. Whinyates' official letter thus states it, and is, of course, to be taken as authority; the Bermuda account makes it 69, and James only 62.

persisted in remaining on deck throughout the engagement.

The *Wasp* was armed with 2 long 12's and 16 32-pound carronades; the *Frolic* with 2 long 6's, 16 32-pound carronades, and 1 shifting 12-pound carronade.

COMPARATIVE FORCE

| | Tons | No. Guns | Weight Metal | Crews | Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Wasp* | 450 | 9 | 250 | 135 | 10 |
| *Frolic* | 467 | 10 | 274 | 110 | 90 |

Vice-Admiral Jurien de la Gravière comments on this action as follows:[52]

"The American fire showed itself to be as accurate as it was rapid. On occasions when the roughness of the sea would seem to render all aim excessively uncertain, the effects of their artillery were not less murderous than under more advantageous conditions. The corvette *Wasp* fought the brig *Frolic* in an enormous sea, under very short canvas, and yet, forty minutes after the beginning of the action, when the two vessels came together, the Americans who leaped aboard the brig found on the deck, covered with dead and dying, but one brave man, who had not left the wheel, and three officers, all wounded, who threw down their swords at the feet of the victors." Admiral de la Gravière's criticisms are especially valuable, because they are those of an expert, who only refers to the War of 1812 in order to apply to the French navy the lessons which it teaches, and who is perfectly unprejudiced. He

[52] "Guerres Maritimes," ii, 287 (Septième Edition, Paris, 1881).

cares for the lesson taught, not the teacher, and is quite as willing to learn from the defeat of the *Chesapeake* as from the victories of the *Constitution* —while most American critics only pay heed to the latter.

The characteristics of the action are the practical equality of the contestants in point of force and the enormous disparity in the damage each suffered; numerically, the *Wasp* was superior by 5 per cent, and inflicted a ninefold greater loss.

Captain Jones was not destined to bring his prize into port, for a few hours afterward the *Poictiers,* a British 74, Captain John Poer Beresford, hove in sight. Now appeared the value of the *Frolic's* desperate defence; if she could not prevent herself from being captured, she had at least ensured her own recapture, and also the capture of the foe. When the *Wasp* shook out her sails they were found to be cut into ribbons aloft, and she could not make off with sufficient speed. As the *Poictiers* passed the *Frolic,* rolling like a log in the water, she threw a shot over her, and soon overtook the *Wasp.* Both vessels were carried into Bermuda. Captain Whinyates was again put in command of the *Frolic.* Captain Jones and his men were soon exchanged; 25,000 dollars prize-money was voted them by Congress, and the Captain and Lieutenant Biddle were both promoted, the former receiving the captured ship *Macedonian.* Unluckily the blockade was too close for him to succeed in getting out during the remainder of the war.

On Oct. 8th Commodore Rodgers left Boston on his second cruise, with the *President, United States, Congress,* and *Argus*,[53] leaving the *Hornet* in port. Four days out, the *United States* and *Argus* separated, while the remaining two frigates continued their cruise together. The *Argus*,[54] Captain Sinclair, cruised to the eastward, making prizes of 6 valuable merchantmen, and returned to port on January 3d. During the cruise she was chased for three days and three nights (the latter being moonlight) by a British squadron, and was obliged to cut away her boats and anchors and start some of her water. But she saved her guns, and was so cleverly handled that during the chase she actually succeeded in taking and manning a prize, though the enemy got near enough to open fire as the vessels separated. Before relating what befell the *United States,* we shall bring Commodore Rodgers' cruise to an end.

On Oct. 10th the Commodore chased, but failed to overtake, the British frigate *Nymphe,* 38, Captain Epworth. On the 18th, off the great Bank of Newfoundland, he captured the Jamaica packet *Swallow,* homeward bound, with 200,000 dollars in specie aboard. On the 31st at 9 A.M., lat. 33° N., long. 32° W., his two frigates fell in with the British frigate *Galatea,* 36, Captain Woodley Losack, convoying two South Sea ships, to windward. The *Galatea* ran down to reconnoitre, and at 10 A.M.,

[53] Letter of Commodore Rodgers, Jan. 1, 1813.
[54] Letter of Capt. Arthur Sinclair, Jan. 4. 1813.

recognizing her foes, hauled up on the starboard tack to escape. The American frigates made all sail in chase, and continued beating to windward, tacking several times, for about three hours. Seeing that she was being overhauled, the *Galatea* now edged away to get on her best point of sailing; at the same moment one of her convoy, the *Argo,* bore up to cross the hawse of her foes, but was intercepted by the *Congress,* who lay to to secure her. Meanwhile the *President* kept after the *Galatea;* she set her topmast, topgallant mast and lower studding-sails, and when it was very dusk, the *President* lost sight of the chase, and, toward midnight, hauled to the wind to rejoin her consort. The two frigates cruised to the east as far as 22° W., and then ran down to 17° N.; but during the month of November they did not see a sail. They had but slightly better luck on their return toward home. Passing 120 miles north of Bermuda, and cruising a little while toward the Virginia capes, they re-entered Boston on Dec. 31st, having made 9 prizes, most of them of little value.

When four days out, on Oct. 12th, Commodore Decatur had separated from the rest of Rodgers' squadron and cruised east: on the 25th, in lat. 29° N., and long. 29° 30′. W., while going close-hauled on the port tack, with the wind fresh from the S. S. E., a sail was descried on the weather beam, about 12 miles distant.[55] This was the British 38-gun frigate *Macedonian,* Captain John Surnam Car-

[55] Official letter of Commodore Decatur, Oct. 30, 1812.

den. She was not, like the *Guerrière*, an old ship captured from the French, but newly built of oak, and larger than any American 18-pounder frigate; she was reputed (very wrongfully) to be a "crack ship." According to Lieut. David Hope, "the state of discipline on board was excellent; in no British ship was more attention paid to gunnery. Before this cruise the ship had been engaged almost every day with the enemy; and in time of peace the crew were constantly exercised at the great guns." [56] How they could have practiced so much and learned so little is certainly marvelous.

The *Macedonian* set her foretopmast and top-gallant studding-sails and bore away in chase,[57] edging down with the wind a little aft the star-board beam. Her first lieutenant wished to continue on this course and pass down ahead of the *United States*,[58] but Captain Carden's over-anxiety to keep the weather-gage lost him this opportunity of closing.[59] Accordingly he hauled by the wind and passed way to windward of the American. As Commodore Decatur got within range, he eased off and fired a broadside, most of which fell short;[60] he then kept his luff, and, the next time he fired, his long 24's told heavily, while he received very little injury himself.[61] The fire from his main-deck

[56] Marshall's "Naval Biography," vol. iv, p. 1018.

[57] Capt. Carden to Mr. Croker, Oct. 28, 1812.

[58] James, vi, 166.

[59] Sentence of Court-martial held on the *San Domingo*, 74, at the Bermudas, May 27, 1812.

[60] Marshall, iv, 1080.

[61] Cooper, ii, 178.

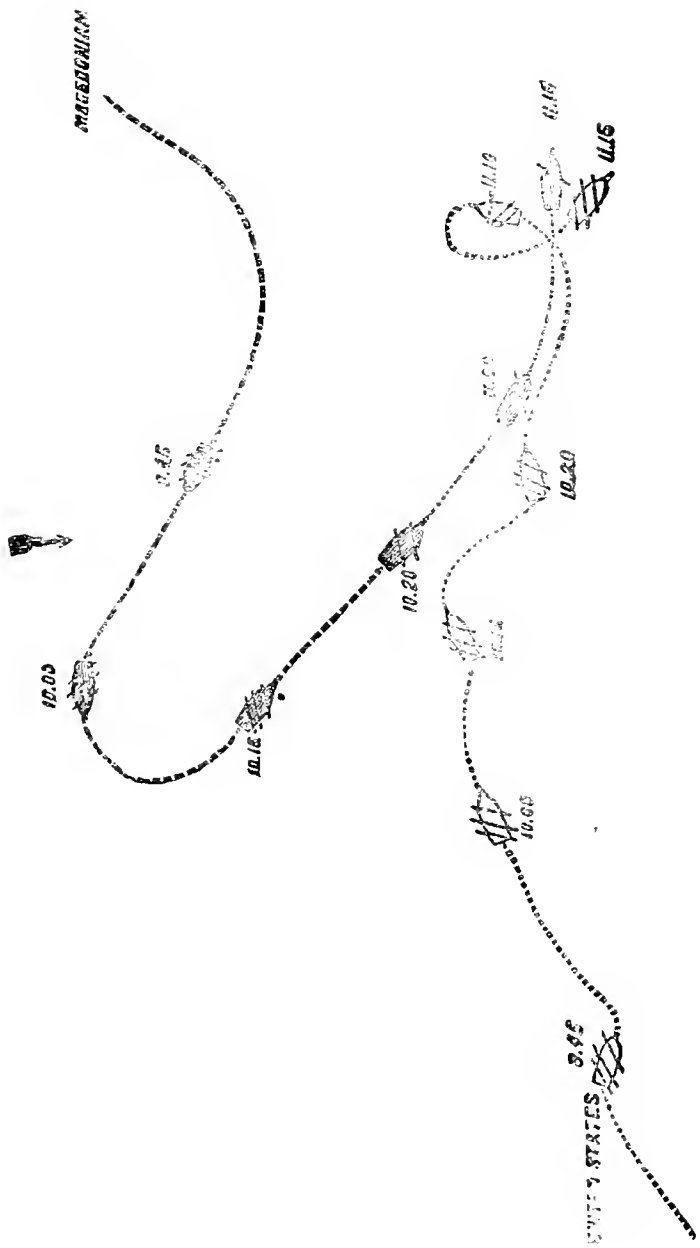
(for he did not use his carronades at all for the first half-hour)[62] was so very rapid that it seemed as if the ship was on fire; his broadsides were delivered with almost twice the rapidity of those of the Englishman.[63] The latter soon found he could not play at long bowls with any chance of success; and, having already erred either from timidity or bad judgment, Captain Carden decided to add rashness to the catalogue of his virtues. Accordingly he bore up, and came down end on toward his adversary, with the wind on his port quarter. The *States* now (10.15) laid her maintopsail aback, and made heavy play with her long guns, and, as her adversary came nearer, with her carronades also. The British ship would reply with her starboard guns, hauling up to do so; as she came down, the American would ease off, run a little way and again come to, keeping up a terrific fire. As the *Mecedonian* bore down to close, the chocks of all her forecastle guns (which were mounted on the outside) were cut away;[64] her fire caused some damage to the American's rigging, but hardly touched her hull, while she herself suffered so heavily both alow and aloft that she gradually dropped to leeward, while the American forereached on her. Finding herself ahead and to windward, the *States* tacked and ranged up under her adversary's lee, when the latter struck her colors at 11.15, just an hour and a half after the beginning of the action.[65]

[62] Letter of Commodore Decatur.

[63] James, vi, 169.

[64] Letter of Captain Carden.

[65] Letter of Com modore Decatur.


MAGEDONIAN
10.00
10.15
10.20
10.20
10.05
11.15
11.15
STATES

The *United States* had suffered surprisingly little; what damage had been done was aloft. Her mizzen topgallant mast was cut away, some of the spars were wounded, and the rigging a good deal cut; the hull was only struck two or three times. The ships were never close enough to be within fair range of grape and musketry,[66] and the wounds were mostly inflicted by round shot and were thus apt to be fatal. Hence the loss of the Americans amounted to Lieutenant John Messer Funk (5th of the ship) and six seamen killed or mortally wounded, and only five severely and slightly wounded.

The *Macedonian*, on the other hand, had received over a hundred shot in her hull, several between wind and water; her mizzenmast had gone by the board; her fore and maintopmasts had been shot away by the caps, and her mainyard in the slings; almost all her rigging was cut away (only the foresail being left); on the engaged side all of her carronades but two, and two of her maindeck guns, were dismounted. Of her crew 43 were killed and mortally wounded, and 61 (including her first and third lieutenants) severely and slightly wounded.[67] Among her crew were eight Americans (as shown by her muster-roll); these asked permission to go below before the battle, but it was refused by Captain Carden, and three were killed during the action. James says that they *were* allowed to go below, but this is untrue; for if they had the three

[66] Letter of Commodore Decatur.

[67] Letter of Captain Carden.

would not have been slain. The others testified that they had been forced to fight, and they afterward entered the American service—the only ones of the *Macedonian's* crew who did, or who were asked to.

The *Macedonian* had her full complement of 301 men; the *States* had, by her muster-roll of October 20th, 428 officers, petty officers, seamen, and boys, and 50 officers and privates of marines, a total of 478 (instead of 509 as Marshall in his "Naval Biography" makes it).

COMPARATIVE FORCE

| | Size | Broadside Guns | Weight Metal | Men | Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *United States* | 1576 | 27 | 786 | 478 | 12 |
| *Macedonian* | 1325 | 25 | 547 | 301 | 104 |

| | Comparative Force | Comparative Loss Inflicted |
|---|---|---|
| *States* | 100 | 100 |
| *Macedonian* | 66 | 11 |

That is, the relative force being about as three is to two,[68] the damage done was as nine to one!

[68] I have considered the *United States* as mounting her full allowance of 54 guns; but it is impossible that she had no more than 49. In Decatur's letter of challenge of Jan. 17, 1814 (which challenge, by the way, was a most blustering affair, reflecting credit neither on Decatur, nor his opponent, Captain Hope, nor on any one else excepting Captain Stackpole of H. M. S. *Statira*), she is said to have had that number; her broadside would then be 15 long 24's below, 1 long 24, 1 12-pound, and 8 42-pound, carronades above. Her *real* broadside weight of metal would thus be about 680 lbs., and she would be superior to the *Macedonian* in the proportion of 5 to 4. But it is possible that Decatur had landed some of his guns in 1813, as James asserts; and though I am not at all sure of this, I have thought it best to be on the safe side in describing his force.

Of course, it would have been almost impossible for the *Macedonian* to conquer with one-third less force; but the disparity was by no means sufficient to account for the ninefold greater loss suffered, and the ease and impunity with which the victory was won. The British sailors fought with their accustomed courage, but their gunnery was exceedingly poor; and it must be remembered that though the ship was bravely fought, still the defence was by no means so desperate as that made by the *Essex* or even the *Chesapeake,* as witnessed by their respective losses. The *Macedonian,* moreover, was surrendered when she had suffered less damage than either the *Guerrière* or *Java.* The chief cause of her loss lay in the fact that Captain Carden was a poor commander. The gunnery of the *Java, Guerrière,* and *Macedonian* was equally bad; but while Captain Lambert proved himself to be as able as he was gallant, and Captain Dacres did nearly as well, Captain Carden, on the other hand, was first too timid, and then too rash, and showed bad judgment at all times. By continuing his original course he could have closed at once; but he lost his chance by over-anxiety to keep the weather-gage, and was censured by the court-martial accordingly. Then he tried to remedy one error by another, and made a foolishly rash approach. A very able and fair-minded English writer says of this action: "As a display of courage the character of the service was nobly upheld, but we would be deceiving ourselves were we to admit that the comparative expertness

of the crews in gunnery was equally satisfactory. Now, taking the difference of effect as given by Captain Carden, we must draw this conclusion—that the comparative loss in killed and wounded (104 to 12), together with the dreadful account he gives of the condition of his own ship, while he admits that the enemy's vessel was in comparatively good order, must have arisen from inferiority in gunnery as well as in force." [69]

On the other hand, the American crew, even according to James, were as fine a set of men as ever were seen on shipboard. Though not one-fourth were British by birth, yet many of them had served on board British ships of war, in some cases voluntarily, but much more often because they were impressed. They had been trained at the guns with the greatest care by Lieutenant Allen. And finally Commodore Decatur handled his ship with absolute faultlessness. To sum up: a brave and skilful crew, ably commanded, was matched against an equally brave but unskilful one, with an incompetent leader; and this accounts for the disparity of loss being so much greater than the disparity in force.

At the outset of this battle the position of the parties was just the reverse of that in the case of the *Constitution* and *Guerrière;* the Englishman had the advantage of the wind, but he used it in a very different manner from that in which Captain Hull had done. The latter at once ran down to close, but manœuvred so cautiously that no damage could be

[69] Lord Howard Douglas, "Naval Gunnery," p. 515.

done him till he was within pistol shot. Captain Carden did not try to close till after fatal indecision, and then made the attempt so heedlessly that he was cut to pieces before he got to close quarters. Commodore Decatur, also, manœuvred more skilfully than Captain Dacres, although the difference was less marked between these two. The combat was a plain cannonade; the *States* derived no advantage from the superior number of her men, for they were not needed. The marines in particular had nothing whatever to do, while they had been of the greatest service against the *Guerrière*. The advantage was simply in metal, as 10 is to 7. Lord Howard Douglas' criticisms on these actions seem to me only applicable in part. He says (p. 524): "The Americans would neither approach nor permit us to join in close battle until they had gained some extraordinary advantage from the superior faculties of their long guns in distant cannonade, and from the intrepid, uncircumspect, and often very exposed approach of assailants who had long been accustomed to contemn all manœuvring. Our vessels were crippled in distant cannonade from encountering rashly the serious disadvantage of making direct attacks; the uncircumspect gallantry of our commanders led our ships unguardedly into the snares which wary caution had spread."

These criticisms are very just as regards the *Macedonian*, and I fully agree with them (possibly reserving the right to doubt Captain Carden's gallantry, though readily admitting his uncircumspec-

tion). But the case of the *Guerrière* differed widely. There the American ship made the attack, while the British at first avoided close combat; and, so far from trying to cripple her adversary by a distant cannonade, the *Constitution* hardly fired a dozen times until within pistol shot. This last point is worth mentioning, because in a work on "Heavy Ordnance," by Captain T. F. Simmons, R.A. (London, 1837), it is stated that the *Guerrière* received her injuries *before* the closing, mentioning especially the "thirty shot below the water-line"; whereas, by the official accounts of both commanders, the reverse was the case. Captain Hull, in his letter, and Lieutenant Morris (in his autobiography) say they only fired a few guns before closing; and Captain Dacres, in his letter, and Captain Brenton, in his "History," say that not much injury was received by the *Guerrière* until about the time the mizzen-mast fell, which was three or four minutes after close action began.

Lieutenant Allen was put aboard the *Macedonian* as prize-master; he secured the fore and mainmasts and rigged a jury mizzenmast, converting the vessel into a bark. Commodore Decatur discontinued his cruise to convoy his prize back to America; they reached New London Dec. 4th. Had it not been for the necessity of convoying the *Macedonian*, the *States* would have continued her cruise, for the damage she suffered was of the most trifling character.

Captain Carden stated (in Marshall's "Naval Biography") that the *States* measured 1,670 tons,

was manned by 509 men, suffered so from shot under water that she had to be pumped out every watch and that two eighteen-pound shot passed in a horizontal line through her mainmast; all of which statements were highly creditable to the vividness of his imagination. The *States* measured but 1,576 tons (and by English measurement very much less), had 478 men aboard, had not been touched by a shot under water-line and her lower masts were unwounded. James states that most of her crew were British, which assertion I have already discussed; and that she had but one boy aboard, and that he was seventeen years old,—in which case 29 others, some of whom (as we learn from the "Life of Decatur") were only twelve, must have grown with truly startling rapidity during the hour and a half that the combat lasted.

During the twenty years preceding 1812, there had been almost incessant warfare on the ocean, and although there had been innumerable single conflicts between French and English frigates, there had been but one case in which the French frigate, single-handed, was victorious. This was in the year 1805, when the *Milan* captured the *Cleopatra*. According to Troude, the former threw at a broadside 574 pounds (actual), the latter but 334; and the former lost 35 men out of her crew of 350; the latter 58 out of 200. Or, the forces being as 100 to 58, the loss inflicted was as 100 to 60; while the *States'* force compared to the *Macedonian's* being as 100 to 66, the loss she inflicted was as 100 to 11.

British ships, moreover, had often conquered against odds as great; as, for instance, when the *Sea Horse* captured the great Turkish frigate *Badere-Zaffer;* when the *Astrea* captured the French frigate *Gloire,* which threw at a broadside 286 pounds of shot, while she threw but 174; and when, most glorious of all, Lord Dundonald, in the gallant little *Speedy,* actually captured the Spanish xebec *Gamo,* of over five times her own force! Similarly, the corvette *Comus* captured the Danish frigate *Fredrickscoarn,* the brig *Onyx* captured the Dutch sloop *Manly,* the little cutter *Thorn* captured the French *Courier-National,* and the *Pasley* the Spanish *Virgin;* while there had been many instances of drawn battles between English 12-pound frigates and French or Spanish 18-pounders.

Captain Hull having resigned the command of the *Constitution* she was given to Captain Bainbridge, of the *Constellation,* who was also entrusted with the command of the *Essex* and *Hornet.* The latter ship was in the port of Boston with the *Constitution,* under the command of Captain Lawrence. The *Essex* was in the Delaware, and accordingly orders were sent to Captain Porter to rendezvous at the island of San Jago; if that failed several other places were appointed, and if, after a certain time, he did not fall in with his commodore he was to act at his own discretion.

On October 26th the *Constitution* and *Hornet* sailed, touched at the different rendezvouses, and on December 13th arrived off San Salvador, where

Captain Lawrence found the *Bonne Citoyenne,* 18, Captain Pitt Barnaby Greene. The *Bonne Citoyenne* was armed with 18 32-pound carronades and 2 long nines, and her crew of 150 men was exactly equal in number to that of the *Hornet;* the latter's short weight in metal made her antagonist superior to her in about the same proportion that she herself was subsequently superior to the *Penguin,* or, in other words, the ships were practically equal. Captain Lawrence now challenged Captain Greene to single fight, giving the usual pledges that the *Constitution* should not interfere. The challenge was not accepted for a variety of reasons; among others the *Bonne Citoyenne* was carrying home half a million pounds in specie[70] Leaving the *Hornet*

[70] Brenton and James both deny that Captain Greene was blockaded by the *Hornet*, and claim that he feared the *Constitution.* James says (p. 275) that the occurrence was one which "the characteristic cunning of Americans turned greatly to their advantage"; and adds that Lawrence only sent the challenge because "it could not be accepted," and so he would "suffer no personal risk." He states that the reason it was sent, as well as the reason that it was refused, was because the *Constitution* was going to remain in the offing and capture the British ship if she proved conqueror. It is somewhat surprising that even James should have had the temerity to advance such arguments. According to his own account (p. 277) the *Constitution* left for Boston on Jan. 6th, and the *Hornet* remained blockading the *Bonne Citoyenne* till the 24th, when the *Montagu*, 74, arrived. During these eighteen days there could have been no possible chance of the *Constitution* or any other ship interfering, and it is ridiculous to suppose that any such fear kept Captain Greene from sailing out to attack his foe. No doubt Captain Greene's course was perfectly justifiable, but it is curious that with all

to blockade her, Commodore Bainbridge ran off to the southward, keeping the land in view.

At 9 A.M., Dec. 29, 1812, while the *Constitution* was running along the coast of Brazil, about thirty miles off shore in latitude 13° 6′ S., and longitude 31° W., two strange sail were made,[71] inshore and to windward. These were H. B. M. frigate *Java*, Captain Lambert, forty-eight days out of Spithead, England, with the captured ship *William* in company. Directing the latter to make for San Salvador, the *Java* bore down in chase of the *Constitution*.[72] The wind was blowing light from the N.N.E., and there was very little sea on. At 10 the *Java* made the private signals, English, Spanish, and Portuguese in succession, none being answered; meanwhile the *Constitution* was standing up toward the *Java* on the starboard tack; a little after 11 she hoisted her private signal, and then, being satisfied that the strange sail was an enemy, she wore and stood off toward the S.E., to draw her antagonist away from the land,[73] which was plainly visible. The *Java* hauled up, and made sail in a parallel course, the *Constitution* bearing about three points

the assertions made by James as to the cowardice of the Americans, this is the only instance throughout the war in which a ship of either party declined a contest with an antagonist of equal force (the cases of Commodore Rodgers and Sir George Collier being evidently due simply to an overestimate of the opposing ships).

[71] Official letter of Commodore Bainbridge, Jan. 3, 1813.

[72] Official letter of Lieutenant Chads, Dec. 31, 1812.

[73] Log of the *Constitution*.

on her lee bow. The *Java* gained rapidly, being much the swifter.

At 1.30 the *Constitution* luffed up, shortened her canvas to topsails, topgallant sails, jib, and spanker, and ran easily off on the port tack, heading toward the southeast; she carried her commodore's pendant at the main, national ensigns at the mizzen-peak and main topgallant masthead, and a Jack at the fore. The *Java* also had taken in the mainsail and royals, and came down in a lasking course on her adversary's weather-quarter,[74] hoisting her ensign at the mizzen-peak, a union Jack at the mizzen topgallant masthead, and another lashed to the main-rigging. At 2 P.M., the *Constitution* fired a shot ahead of her, following it quickly by a broadside,[75] and the two ships began at long bowls, the English firing the lee or starboard battery while the Americans replied with their port guns. The cannonade was very spirited on both sides, the ships suffering about equally. The first broadside of the *Java* was very destructive, killing and wounding several of the *Constitution's* crew. The *Java* kept edging down, and the action continued, with grape and musketry in addition; the swifter British ship soon fore-reached and kept away, intending to wear across her slower antagonist's bow and rake her; but the latter wore in the smoke, and the two combatants ran off to the westward, the Englishman

[74] Lieutenant Chads' Address to the Court-martial, April 23, 1813.

[75] Commodore Bainbridge's letter.

still a-weather and steering freer than the *Constitution*, which had luffed to close.[76] The action went on at pistol-shot distance. In a few minutes, however, the *Java* again forged ahead, out of the weight of her adversary's fire, and then kept off, as before, to cross her bows; and, as before, the *Constitution* avoided this by wearing, both ships again coming round with their heads to the east, the American still to leeward. The *Java* kept the weather-gage tenaciously, fore-reaching a little, and whenever the *Constitution* luffed up to close,[77] the former tried to rake her. But her gunnery was now poor, little damage being done by it; most of the loss the Americans suffered was early in the action. By setting her foresail and mainsail the *Constitution* got up close on the enemy's lee beam, her fire being very heavy and carrying away the end of the *Java's* bowsprit and her jibboom.[78] The *Constitution* forged ahead and repeated her former manœuvre, wearing in the smoke. The *Java* at once hove in stays, but owing to the loss of headsail fell off very slowly, and the American frigate poured a heavy raking broadside into her stern, at about two cables' length distance. The *Java* replied with her port guns as she fell off.[79] Both vessels then bore up and ran off free, with the wind on the port quarter, the *Java* being abreast and to windward of her antagonist, both with their heads a little east of south. The ships were less than a cable's length

[76] Log of the *Constitution*.
[77] Lieutenant Chads' letter.
[78] Do.
[79] Lieut. Chads' letter.

apart, and the *Constitution* inflicted great damage while suffering very little herself. The British lost many men by the musketry of the American topmen, and suffered still more from the round and grape, especially on the forecastle,[80] many marked instances of valor being shown on both sides. The *Java's* masts were wounded and her rigging cut to pieces, and Captain Lambert then ordered her to be laid aboard the enemy, who was on her lee beam. The helm was put a-weather, and the *Java* came down for the *Constitution's* main-chains. The boarders and marines gathered in the gangways and on the forecastle, the boatswain having been ordered to cheer them up with his pipe that they might make a clean spring.[81] The Americans, however, raked the British with terrible effect, cutting off their main topmast above the cap, and their foremast near the cat harpings.[82] The stump of the *Java's* bowsprit got caught in the *Constitution's* mizzen-rigging, and before it got clear the British suffered still more.

Finally the ships separated, the *Java's* bowsprit passing over the taffrail of the *Constitution;* the latter at once kept away to avoid being raked. The ships again got nearly abreast, but the *Constitution,* in her turn, fore-reached; whereupon Commodore Bainbridge wore, passed his antagonist, luffed up under his quarter, raked him with the starboard

[80] Testimony of Christopher Speedy, in minutes of the Court-martial on board H. M. S. *Gladiator*, at Portsmouth, April 23, 1813.

[81] Testimony of James Humble, in do., do.

[82] Log of *Constitution.*

guns, then wore, and recommenced the action with his port broadside at about 3.10. Again the vessels were abreast, and the action went on as furiously as ever. The wreck of the top hamper on the *Java* lay over her starboard side, so that every discharge of her guns set her on fire,[83] and in a few minutes her able and gallant commander was mortally wounded by a ball fired by one of the American maintopmen.[84] The command then devolved on the first lieutenant, Chads, himself painfully wounded. The slaughter had been terrible, yet the British fought on with stubborn resolution, cheering lustily. But success was now hopeless, for nothing could stand against the cool precision of the Yankee fire. The stump of the *Java's* foremast was carried away by a double-headed shot, the mizzenmast fell, the gaff and spanker boom were shot away, also the main-yard, and finally the ensign was cut down by a shot, and all her guns absolutely silenced; when at 4.05 the *Constitution,* thinking her adversary had struck,[85] ceased firing, hauled aboard her tacks, and passed across her adversary's bows to windward, with her topsails, jib, and spanker set. A few minutes afterward the *Java's* mainmast fell, leaving her a sheer hulk. The *Constitution* assumed a weatherly position, and spent an hour in repairing damages and securing her masts; then she wore and stood toward her enemy, whose flag was again fly-

[83] Lieut. Chads' Address.

[84] Surgeon J. C. Jones' Report.

[85] Log of the *Constitution* (as given in Bainbridge's letter).

ing, but only for bravado, for as soon as the *Constitution* stood across her forefoot she struck. At 5.25 she was taken possession of by Lieutenant Parker, 1st of the *Constitution,* in one of the latter's only two remaining boats.

The American ship had suffered comparatively little. But a few round shot had struck her hull, one of which carried away the wheel; one 18-pounder went through the mizzenmast; the foremast, maintopmast, and a few other spars were slightly wounded, and the running rigging and shrouds were a good deal cut; but in an hour she was again in good fighting trim. Her loss amounted to 8 seamen and 1 marine killed; the 5th lieutenant, John C. Aylwin, and 2 seamen, mortally, Commodore Bainbridge and 12 seamen, severely, and 7 seamen and 2 marines, slightly wounded; in all 12 killed and mortally wounded, and 22 wounded severely and slightly.[86]

"The *Java* sustained unequally injuries beyond the *Constitution*," says the British account.[87] These have already been given in detail; she was a riddled and entirely dismasted hulk. Her loss (for discussion of which see further on) was 48 killed (including Captain Henry Lambert, who died soon after the close of the action, and five midshipmen), and 102 wounded, among them Lieutenant Henry Ducie Chads, Lieutenant of Marines David Davies, Commander John Marshall, Lieutenant James Saun-

[86] Report of Surgeon Amos A. Evans.

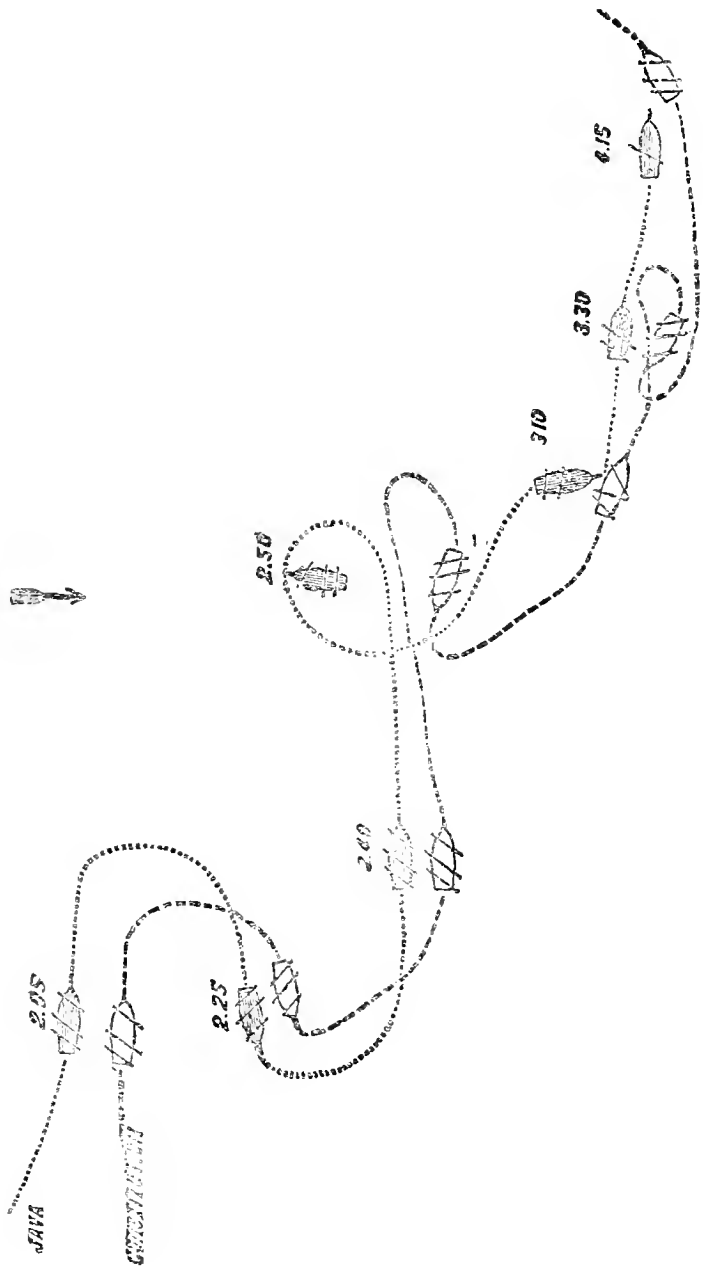
[87] "Naval Chronicle," xxix, 452.

ders, the boatswain, James Humble, master, Batty Robinson, and four midshipmen.

In this action both ships displayed equal gallantry and seamanship. "The *Java*," says Commodore Bainbridge, "was exceedingly well handled and bravely fought. Poor Captain Lambert was a distinguished and gallant officer, and a most worthy man, whose death I sincerely regret." The manœuvring on both sides was excellent; Captain Lambert used the advantage which his ship possessed in her superior speed most skilfully, always endeavoring to run across his adversary's bows and rake him when he had fore-reached, and it was only owing to the equal skill which his antagonist displayed that he was foiled, the length of the combat being due to the number of evolutions. The great superiority of the Americans was in their gunnery. The fire of the *Java* was both less rapid and less well-directed than that of her antagonist; the difference of force against her was not heavy, being about as ten is to nine, and was by no means enough to account for the almost fivefold greater loss she suffered.

On next page is a diagram of the battle. It differs from both of the official accounts, as these conflict greatly both as to time and as regards some of the evolutions. I generally take the mean in cases of difference; for example, Commodore Bainbridge's report makes the fight endure but 1 hour and 55 minutes, Lieutenant Chads' 2 hours and 25 minutes; I have made it 2 hours and 10 minutes, etc., etc.

The tonnage and weight of metal of the comba-




This differs somewhat from the English diagram; the American officers distinctly assert that the *Java* kept the weather-gage in every position

tants have already been stated; I will give the complements shortly. The following is the

COMPARATIVE FORCE AND LOSS

| | Tons | Weight Metal | No. Men | Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Constitution* | 1576 | 654 | 475 | 34 |
| *Java* | 1,340 | 576 | 426 | 150 |

| | Relative Force | Relative Loss Inflicted |
|---|---|---|
| *Constitution* | 100 | 100 |
| *Java* | 89 | 23 |

In hardly another action of the war do the accounts of the respective forces differ so widely; the official British letter makes their total of men at the beginning of the action 377, of whom Commodore Bainbridge officially reports that he paroled 378! The British state their loss in killed and mortally wounded at 24; Commodore Bainbridge reports that the dead alone amounted to nearly 60! Usually I have taken each commander's account of his own force and loss, and I should do so now if it were not that the British accounts differ among themselves, and whenever they relate to the Americans are flatly contradicted by the affidavits of the latter's officers. The British first handicap themselves by the statement that the surgeon of the *Constitution* was an Irishman and lately an assistant surgeon in the British navy ("Naval Chronicle," xxix, 452); which draws from Surgeon Amos A. Evans a solemn statement in the Boston "Gazette" that he was born in Maryland and was never in the British navy in his life. Then Surgeon Jones of the *Java,* in his official report, after giving his own

killed and mortally wounded at 24, says that the Americans lost in all about 60, and that 4 of their amputations perished under his own eyes; whereupon Surgeon Evans makes the statement ("Niles' Register," vi, p. 35), backed up by affidavits of his brother officers, that in all he had but five amputations, of whom only one died, and that one a month after Surgeon Jones had left the ship. To meet the assertions of Lieutenant Chads that he began action with but 377 men, the *Constitution's* officers produced the *Java's* muster-roll, dated Nov. 17th, or five days after she had sailed, which showed 446 persons, of whom 20 had been put on board a prize. The presence of this large number of supernumeraries on board is explained by the fact that the *Java* was carrying out Lieutenant-General Hislop, the newly-appointed Governor of Bombay, and his suite, together with part of the crews for the *Cornwallis*, 74, and gun-sloops *Chameleon* and *Icarus;* she also contained stores for those two ships.

Besides conflicting with the American reports, the British statements contradict one another. The official published report gives but two midshipmen as killed; while one of the volumes of the "Naval Chronicle" (vol. xxix, p. 452) contains a letter from one of the *Java's* lieutenants, in which he states that there were five. Finally, Commodore Bainbridge found on board the *Constitution*, after the prisoners had left, a letter from Lieutenant H. D. Cornick, dated Jan. 1, 1813, and addressed to Lieutenant Peter V. Wood, 22d Regiment, foot, in which he

states that 65 of their men were killed. James ("Naval Occurrences") gets around this by stating that it was probably a forgery; but aside from the improbability of Commodore Bainbridge being a forger, this could not be so, for nothing would have been easier than for the British lieutenant to have denied having written it, which he never did. On the other hand, it would be very likely that in the heat of the action, Commodore Bainbridge and the *Java's* own officers should overestimate the latter's loss.[88]

Taking all these facts into consideration, we find 446 men on board the *Java* by her own muster-list; 378 of these were paroled by Commodore Bainbridge at San Salvador; 24 men were acknowledged by the enemy to be killed or mortally wounded; 20 were absent in a prize, leaving 24 unaccounted for, who were undoubtedly slain.

The British loss was 48 men killed and mortally wounded, 102 wounded severely and slightly. The *Java* was better handled and more desperately defended than the *Macedonian* or even the *Guerrière*, and the odds against her were much smaller; so she caused her opponent greater loss, though her gunnery was no better than theirs.

[88] For an account of the shameless corruption then existing in the Naval Administration of Great Britain, see Lord Dundonald's "Autobiography of a Seaman." The letters of the commanders were often garbled, as is mentioned by Brenton. Among numerous cases that he gives, may be mentioned the cutting out of the *Chevrette*, where he distinctly says, "our loss was much greater than was ever acknowledged." (Vol. i, p. 505, edition of 1837.)

Lieutenant Parker, prize-master of the *Java,* removed all the prisoners and baggage to the *Constitution,* and reported the prize to be in a very disabled state; owing partly to this, but more to the long distance from home and the great danger there was of recapture, Commodore Bainbridge destroyed her on the 31st, and then made sail for San Salvador. "Our gallant enemy," reports Lieutenant Chads, "has treated us most generously"; and Lieutenant-General Hislop presented the Commodore with a very handsome sword as a token of gratitude for the kindness with which he had treated the prisoners.

Partly in consequence of his frigate's injuries, but especially because of her decayed condition, Commodore Bainbridge sailed from San Salvador on Jan. 6, 1813, reaching Boston Feb. 27th, after his four months' cruise. At San Salvador he left the *Hornet* still blockading the *Bonne Citoyenne.*

In order "to see oureslves as others see us," I shall again quote from Admiral Jurien de la Gravière,[89] as his opinions are certainly well worthy of attention both as to these first three battles, and as to the lessons they teach. "When the American Congress declared war on England in 1812," he says, "it seemed as if this unequal conflict would crush her navy in the act of being born; instead, it but fertilized the germ. It is only since that epoch that the United States has taken rank among maritime powers. Some combats of frigates, corvettes, and brigs, insignificant without doubt as regards

[89] "Guerres Maritimes," ii, 284 (Paris, 1881).

material results, sufficed to break the charm which protected the standard of St. George, and taught Europe what she could have already learned from some of our combats, if the louder noise of our defeats had not drowned the glory, that the only invincibles on the sea are good seamen and good artillerists.

"The English covered the ocean with their cruisers when this unknown navy, composed of six frigates and a few small craft hitherto hardly numbered, dared to establish its cruisers at the mouth of the Channel, in the very centre of the British power. But already the *Constitution* had captured the *Guerrière* and *Java*, the *United States* had made a prize of the *Macedonian*, the *Wasp* of the *Frolic*, and the *Hornet* of the *Peacock*. The honor of the new flag was established. England, humiliated, tried to attribute her multiplied reverses to the unusual size of the vessels which Congress had had constructed in 1799, and which did the fighting in 1812. She wished to refuse them the name of frigates, and called them, not without some appearance of reason, disguised line-of-battle ships. Since then all maritime powers have copied these gigantic models, as the result of the war of 1812 obliged England herself to change her naval material; but if they had employed, instead of frigates, cut-down 74's (vaisseaux rasés), it would still be difficult to explain the prodigious success of the Americans. . . .

"In an engagement which terminated in less than half an hour, the English frigate *Guerrière*, com-

pletely dismasted, had fifteen men killed, sixty-three wounded, and more than thirty shot below the water-line. She sank twelve hours after the combat. The *Constitution,* on the contrary, had but seven men killed and seven wounded, and did not lose a mast. As soon as she had replaced a few cut ropes and changed a few sails, she was in condition, even by the testimony of the British historian, to take another *Guerrière.* The *United States* took an hour and a half to capture the *Macedonian,* and the same difference made itself felt in the damage suffered by the two ships. The *Macedonian* had her mast shattered, two of her maindeck and all her spardeck guns disabled; more than a hundred shot had penetrated the hull, and over a third of the crew had suffered by the hostile fire. The American frigate, on the contrary, had to regret but five men killed and seven wounded; her guns had been fired each sixty-six times to the *Macedonian's* thirty-six. The combat of the *Constitution* and the *Java* lasted two hours, and was the most bloody of these three engagements. The *Java* only struck when she had been razed like a sheer hulk; she had twenty-two men killed and one hundred and two wounded.

. . . . . .

"This war should be studied with unceasing diligence; the pride of two peoples to whom naval affairs are so generally familiar has cleared all the details and laid bare all the episodes, and through the sneers which the victors should have spared, merely out of care for their own glory, at every step can be

seen that great truth, that there is only success for those who know how to prepare it.

. . . . . .

"It belongs to us to judge impartially these marine events, too much exalted perhaps by a national vanity one is tempted to excuse. The Americans showed, in the War of 1812, a great deal of skill and resolution. But if, as they have asserted, the chances had always been perfectly equal between them and their adversaries, if they had only owed their triumphs to the intrepidity of Hull, Decatur, and Bainbridge, there would be for us but little interest in recalling the struggle. We need not seek lessons in courage outside of our own history. On the contrary, what is to be well considered is that the ships of the United States constantly fought with the chances in their favor, and it is on this that the American Government should found its true title to glory. . . . The Americans in 1812 had secured to themselves the advantage of a better organization [than the English]."

The fight between the *Constitution* and the *Java* illustrates best the proposition, "that there is only success for those who know how to prepare it." Here the odds in men and metal were only about as 10 to 9 in favor of the victors, and it is safe to say that they might have been reversed without vitally affecting the result. In the fight Lambert handled his ship as skilfully as Bainbridge did his; and the *Java's* men proved by their indomitable courage that they were excellent material. The *Java's* crew was

new shipped for the voyage, and had been at sea but six weeks; in the *Constitution's* first fight her crew had been aboard of her but *five* weeks. So the chances should have been nearly equal, and the difference in fighting capacity that was shown by the enormous disparity in the loss, and still more in the damage inflicted, was due to the fact that the officers of one ship had, and the officers of the other had not, trained their raw crews. The *Constitution's* men were not "picked," but simply average American sailors, as the *Java's* were average British sailors. The essential difference was in the training.

During the six weeks the *Java* was at sea, her men had fired but six broadsides, of blank cartridges; during the first five weeks the *Constitution* cruised, her crew were incessantly practiced at firing with blank cartridges, and also at a target.[90] The *Java's* crew had only been exercised occasionally, even in pointing the guns, and when the captain of a gun was killed the effectiveness of the piece was temporarily ruined, and, moreover, the men did not work together. The *Constitution's* crew were exercised till they worked like machines, and yet with enough individuality to render it impossible to cripple a gun by killing one man. The unpracticed British sailors fired at random; the trained Americans took

[90] In looking through the logs of the *Constitution*, *Hornet*, etc., we continually find such entries as "beat to quarters," "exercised the men at the great guns," "exercised with musketry," "exercised the boarders," "exercised the great guns, blank cartridges, and afterward firing at mark."

aim. The British marines had not been taught anything approximating to skirmishing or sharpshooting; the Americans had. The British sailors had not even been trained enough in the ordinary duties of seamen; while the Americans in five weeks had been rendered almost perfect. The former were at a loss what to do in an emergency at all out of their own line of work; they were helpless when the wreck fell over their guns, when the Americans would have cut it away in a jiffy. As we learn from Commodore Morris' "Autobiography," each Yankee sailor could, at need, do a little carpentering or sail-mending, and so was more self-reliant. The crew had been trained to act as if guided by one mind, yet each man retained his own individuality. The petty officers were better paid than in Great Britain, and so were of a better class of men, thoroughly self-respecting; the Americans soon got their subordinates in order, while the British did not. To sum up: one ship's crew had been trained practically and thoroughly, while the other crew was not much better off than the day it sailed; and, as far as it goes, this is a good test of the efficiency of the two navies.

The U. S. brig *Vixen*, 12, Lieutenant George U. Read, had been cruising off the southern coast; on Nov. 22d she fell in with the *Southampton*, 32, Captain Sir James Lucas Yeo, and was captured after a short but severe trial of speed. Both vessels were wrecked soon afterward.

The *Essex,* 32, Captain David Porter, left the Delaware on Oct. 28th, two days after Commodore Bainbridge had left Boston. She expected to make a very long cruise and so carried with her an unusual quantity of stores and sixty more men than ordinarily, so that her muster-roll contained 319 names. Being deep in the water she reached San Jago after Bainbridge had left. Nothing was met with until after the *Essex* had crossed the equator in long. 30° W. on Dec. 11th. On the afternoon of the next day a sail was made out to windward, and chased. At nine in the evening it was overtaken, and struck after receiving a volley of musketry which killed one man. The prize proved to be the British packet *Nocton,* of 10 guns and 31 men, with $55,000 in specie aboard. The latter was taken out, and the *Nocton* sent home with Lieutenant Finch and a prize crew of 17 men, but was recaptured by a British frigate.

The next appointed rendezvous was the Island of Fernando de Noronha, where Captain Porter found a letter from Commodore Bainbridge, informing him that the other vessels were off Cape Frio. Thither cruised Porter, but his compatriots had left. On the 29th he captured an English merchant vessel; and he was still cruising when the year closed.

The year 1812, on the ocean, ended as gloriously as it had begun. In four victorious fights the disparity in loss had been so great as to sink the disparity of force into insignificance. Our successes had been unaccompanied by any important reverse.

Nor was it alone by the victories, but by the cruises, that the year was noteworthy. The Yankee men-of-war sailed almost in sight of the British coast and right in the track of the merchant fleets and their armed protectors. Our vessels had shown themselves immensely superior to their foes.

The reason of these striking and unexpected successes was that our navy in 1812 was the exact reverse of what our navy is now, in 1882. I am not alluding to the personnel, which still remains excellent; but, whereas we now have a large number of worthless vessels, standing very low down in their respective classes, we then possessed a few vessels, each unsurpassed by any foreign ship of her class. To bring up our navy to the condition in which it stood in 1812 it would not be *necessary* (although in reality both very wise and in the end very economical) to spend any more money than at present; only instead of using it to patch up a hundred antiquated hulks, it should be employed in building half a dozen ships on the most effective model. If in 1812 our ships had borne the same relation to the British ships that they do now, not all the courage and skill of our sailors would have won us a single success. As it was, we could only cope with the lower rates, and had no vessels to oppose to the great "liners"; but to-day there is hardly any foreign ship, no matter how low its rate, that is not superior to the corresponding American ones. It is too much to hope that our political short-sightedness will ever enable us to have a navy that is first-class

in point of size; but there certainly seems no reason why what ships we have should not be of the very best quality. The effect of a victory is twofold, moral and material. Had we been as roughly handled on water as we were on land during the first year of the war, such a succession of disasters would have had a most demoralizing effect on the nation at large. As it was, our victorious sea-fights, while they did not inflict any material damage upon the colossal sea-might of England, had the most important results in the feelings they produced at home and even abroad. Of course they were magnified absurdly by most of our writers at the time; but they do not need to be magnified, for as they are any American can look back upon them with the keenest national pride. For a hundred and thirty years England had had no equal on the sea; and now she suddenly found one in the untried navy of an almost unknown power.

BRITISH VESSELS CAPTURED OR DESTROYED IN 1812

| Name | Guns | Tonnage | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Guerriere* | 49 | 1,340 | |
| *Macedonian* | 49 | 1,325 | |
| *Java* | 49 | 1,340 | |
| *Frolic* | 19 | 477 | Recaptured |
| *Alert* | 20 | 325 | |
| | 186 | 4,807 | |
| | 19 | 477 | Deducting *Frolic* |
| | 167 | 4,330 | |

AMERICAN VESSELS CAPTURED OR DESTROYED

| Name | Guns | Tonnage |
|---|---|---|
| *Wasp* | 18 | 450 |
| *Nautilus* | 14 | 185 |
| *Vixen* | 14 | 185 |
| | 46 | 820 |

VESSELS BUILT IN 1812

| Name | Rig | Guns | Tonnage | Where Built | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Nonsuch* | Schooner | 14 | 148 | Charleston | $15,000 |
| *Carolina* | Schooner | 14 | 230 | Charleston | 8,743 |
| *Louisiana* | Ship | 16 | 341 | New Orleans | 15,500 |

PRIZES MADE [91]

| Ship | No. of Prizes |
|---|---|
| *President* | 7 |
| *United States* | 2 |
| *Constitution* | 9 |
| *Congress* | 2 |
| *Chesapeake* | 1 |
| *Essex* | 11 |
| *Wasp* | 2 |
| *Hornet* | 1 |
| *Argus* | 6 |
| *Small craft* | 5 |
| | 46 |

[91] These can only be approximately given; the records are often incomplete or contradictory, especially as regards the small craft. Most accounts do not give by any means the full number.

# CHAPTER IV

## 1812

### ON THE LAKES

PRELIMINARY—The combatants starting nearly on an equality—Difficulties of creating a naval force—Difficulty of comparing the force of the rival squadrons—Meagreness of the published accounts—Unreliability of James—ONTARIO—Extraordinary nature of the American squadron—Canadian squadron forming only a kind of water militia—Sackett's Harbor feebly attacked by Commodore Earle—Commodore Chauncy bombards York—ERIE—Lieutenant Elliott captures the *Detroit* and *Caledonia*—Unsuccessful expedition of Lieutenant Angus.

AT the time we are treating of, the State of Maine was so sparsely settled, and covered with such a dense growth of forest, that it was practically impossible for either of the contending parties to advance an army through its territory. A continuation of the same wooded and mountainous district protected the northern parts of Vermont and New Hampshire, while in New York the Adirondack region was an impenetrable wilderness. It thus came about that the northern boundary was formed, for military purposes, by Lake Huron, Lake Erie, the Niagara, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence, and, after an interval, by Lake Champlain. The road into the States by the latter ran close along shore, and without a naval force the invader would be wholly un-

able to protect his flanks, and would probably have his communications cut. This lake, however, was almost wholly within the United States, and did not become of importance till toward the end of the war. Upon it were two American gunboats, regularly officered and manned, and for such smooth water sufficiently effective vessels.

What was at that time the western part of the northern frontier became the main theatre of military operations, and as it presented largely a water front, a naval force was an indispensable adjunct, the command of the lakes being of the utmost importance. As these lakes were fitted for the manœuvring of ships of the largest size, the operations upon them were of the same nature as those on the ocean, and properly belong to naval and not to military history. But while on the ocean America started with too few ships to enable her really to do any serious harm to her antagonist, on the inland waters the two sides began very nearly on an equality. The chief regular forces either belligerent possessed were on Lake Ontario. Here the United States had a man-of-war brig, the *Oneida*, of 240 tons, carrying 16 24-pound carronades, manned by experienced seamen, and commanded by Lieutenant M. T. Woolsey. Great Britain possessed the *Royal George*, 22, *Prince Regent*, 16, *Earl of Moira*, 14, *Gloucester*, 10, *Seneca*, 8, and *Simco*, 8, all under the command of a Commodore Earle; but though this force was so much the more powerful it was very inefficient, not being considered as belonging to the regular

navy, the sailors being undisciplined, and the officers totally without experience, never having been really trained in the British service. From these causes it resulted that the struggle on the lakes was to be a work as much of creating as of using a navy. On the seaboard success came to those who made best use of the ships that had already been built; on the lakes the real contest lay in the building. And building an inland navy was no easy task. The country around the lakes, especially on the south side, was still very sparsely settled, and all the American naval supplies had to be brought from the seaboard cities through the valley of the Mohawk. There was no canal or other means of communication, except very poor roads intermittently relieved by transportation on the Mohawk and on Oneida Lake, when they were navigable. Supplies were thus brought up at an enormous cost, with tedious delays and great difficulty; and bad weather put a stop to all travel. Very little indeed, beyond timber, could be procured at the stations on the lakes. Still a few scattered villages and small towns had grown up on the shores, whose inhabitants were largely engaged in the carrying trade: the vessels used for the purpose were generally small sloops or schooners, swift and fairly good sailers, but very shallow and not fitted for rough weather. The frontiersmen themselves, whether Canadian or American, were bold, hardy seamen, and when properly trained and led made excellent man-of-war's-men; but on the American side they were too few in

number and too untrained to be made use of, and the seamen had to come from the coast. But the Canadian shores had been settled longer, the inhabitants were more numerous, and by means of the St. Lawrence the country was easy of access to Great Britain; so that the seat of war, as regards getting naval supplies, and even men, was nearer to Great Britain than to us. Our enemies also possessed in addition to the squadron on Lake Ontario another on Lake Erie, consisting of the *Queen Charlotte*, 17, *Lady Prevost*, 13, *Hunter*, 10, *Caledonia*, 2, *Little Belt*, 2, and *Chippeway*, 2. These two squadrons furnished training schools for some five hundred Canadian seamen, whom a short course of discipline under experienced officers sufficed to render as good men as their British friends or American foes. Very few British seamen ever reached Lake Erie (according to James, not over fifty); but on Lake Ontario, and afterward on Lake Champlain, they formed the bulk of the crews, "picked seamen, sent out by government expressly for service on the Canada lakes."[1] As the contrary has sometimes been asserted it may be as well to mention that Admiral Codrington states that no want of seamen contributed to the British disasters on the lakes, as their sea-ships at Quebec had men drafted from them for that service till their crews were utterly depleted.[2] I am bound to state that while I think that

[1] James vi, 353.

[2] Memoirs, i, 322, referring especially to battle of Lake Champlain.

on the ocean our sailors showed themselves superior to their opponents, especially in gun practice, on the lakes the men of the rival fleets were as evenly matched, in skill and courage, as could well be. The difference, when there was any, appeared in the officers, and, above all, in the builders; which was the more creditable to us, as in the beginning we were handicapped by the fact that the British already had a considerable number of war vessels, while we had but one.

The Falls of Niagara interrupt navigation between Erie and Ontario; so there were three independent centres of naval operations on the northern frontier. The first was on Lake Champlain, where only the Americans possessed any force, and, singularly enough, this was the only place where the British showed more enterprise in shipbuilding than we did. Next came Lake Ontario, where both sides made their greatest efforts, but where the result was indecisive, though the balance of success was slightly inclined toward us. Our naval station was at Sackett's Harbor; that of our foes at Kingston. The third field of operations was Lake Erie and the waters above it. Here both sides showed equal daring and skill in the fighting, and our advantage must be ascribed to the energy and success with which we built and equipped vessels. Originally we had no force at all on these waters, while several vessels were opposed to us. It is a matter of wonder that the British and Canadian governments should have been so supine as to permit their existing force

to go badly armed, and so unenterprising as to build but one additional ship, when they could easily have preserved their superiority.

It is very difficult to give a full and fair account of the lake campaigns. The inland navies were created especially for the war, and, after it were allowed to decay, so that the records of the tonnage, armament, and crews are hard to get at. Of course, where everything had to be created, the services could not have the regular character of those on the ocean. The vessels employed were of widely different kinds, and this often renders it almost impossible to correctly estimate the relative force of two opposing squadrons. While the Americans were building their lake navy, they, as make-shifts, made use of some ordinary merchant schooners, which were purchased and fitted up with one or two long, heavy guns each. These gun-vessels had no quarters, and suffered under all the other disadvantages which make a merchant vessel inferior to a regularly constructed man-of-war. The chief trouble was that in a heavy sea they had a strong tendency to capsize, and were so unsteady that the guns could not be aimed when any wind was blowing. Now, if a few of these schooners, mounting long 32's, encountered a couple of man-of-war brigs, armed with carronades, which side was strongest? In smooth water the schooners had the advantage, and in rough weather they were completely at the mercy of the brigs: so that it would be very hard to get at the true worth of such a contest as each side

would be tolerably sure to insist that the weather was such as to give a great advantage to the other. In all the battles and skirmishes on Champlain, Erie, and Huron, at least there was no room left for doubt as to who were the victors. But on Lake Ontario there was never any decisive struggle, and whenever an encounter occurred, each commodore always claimed that his adversary had "declined the combat," though "much superior in strength." It is, of course, almost impossible to find out which really did decline the combat, for the official letters flatly contradict each other; and it is often almost as difficult to discover where the superiority in force lay, when the fleets differed so widely in character as was the case in 1813. Then Commodore Chauncy's squadron consisted largely of schooners; their long, heavy guns made his total foot up in a very imposing manner, and similar gun-vessels did very good work on Lake Erie; so Commodore Yeo, and more especially Commodore Yeo's admirers, exalted these schooners to the skies, and conveyed the impression that they were most formidable craft, by means of which Chauncy ought to have won great victories. Yet when Yeo captured two of them he refused to let them even cruise with his fleet, and they were sent back to act as coast gunboats and transports, which certainly would not have been done had they been fitted to render any effectual assistance. Again, one night a squall came on and the two largest schooners went to the bottom, which did not tend to increase the confidence felt

in the others. So there can be no doubt that in all but very smooth water the schooners could almost be counted out of the fight. Then the question arises in any given case, was the water smooth? And the testimony is as conflicting as ever.

It is not too easy to reconcile the official letters of the commanders, and it is still harder to get at the truth from either the American or British histories. Cooper is very inexact, and, moreover, paints everything *couleur de rose*, paying no attention to the British side of the question, and distributing so much praise to everybody that one is at a loss to know where it really belongs. Still, he is very useful, for he lived at the time of the events he narrates, and could get much information about them at first hand, from the actors themselves. James is almost the only British authority on the subject; but he is not nearly as reliable as when dealing with the ocean contests, most of this part of his work being taken up with a succession of acrid soliloquies on the moral defects of the American character. The British records for this extraordinary service on the lakes were not at all carefully kept, and so James is not hampered by the necessity of adhering more or less closely to official documents, but lets his imagination run loose. On the ocean and seaboard his account of the British force can generally be relied upon; but on the lakes his authority is questionable in everything relating either to friends or foes. This is the more exasperating because it is done wilfully, when, if he had chosen, he could have

written an invaluable history; he must often have known the truth when, as a matter of preference, he chose either to suppress or alter it. Thus he ignores all the small "cutting out" expeditions in which the Americans were successful, and where one would like to hear the British side. For example, Captain Yeo captured two schooners, the *Julia* and *Growler*, but Chauncy recaptured both. We have the American account of this recapture in full, but James does not even hint at it, and blandly puts down both vessels in the total "American loss" at the end of his smaller work. Worse still, when the *Growler* again changed hands, he counts it in again, in the total, as if it were an entirely different boat, although he invariably rules out of the American list all recaptured vessels. A more serious perversion of facts are his statements about comparative tonnage. This was at that time measured arbitrarily, the depth of hold being estimated at half the breadth of beam; and the tonnage of our lake vessels was put down exactly as if they were regular ocean cruisers of the same dimensions in length and breadth. But on these inland seas the vessels really did not draw more than half as much water as on the ocean, and the depth would of course be much less. James, in comparing the tonnage, gives that of the Americans as if they were regular ocean ships, but in the case of the British vessels, carefully allows for their shallowness, although professing to treat the two classes in the same way; and thus he makes out a most striking and purely imaginary difference. The

best example is furnished by his accounts of the fleets on Lake Erie. The captured vessels were appraised by two captains and the shipbuilder, Mr. Henry Eckford, their tonnage being computed precisely as the tonnage of the American vessels. The appraisement was recorded in the Navy Department, and was first made public by Cooper, so that it could not have been done for effect. Thus measured it was found that the tonnage was in round numbers as follows: *Detroit*, 490 tons; *Queen Charlotte*, 400; *Lady Prevost*, 230; *Hunter*, 180; *Little Bell*, 90; *Chippeway*, 70. James makes them measure respectively 305, 280, 120, 74, 54, and 32 tons, but carefully gives the American ships the regular sea tonnage. So also he habitually deducts about 25 per cent from the real number of men on board the British ships; as regards Lake Erie he contradicts himself so much that he does not need to be exposed from outside sources. But the most glaring and least excusable misstatements are made as to the battle of Lake Champlain, where he gives the American as greatly exceeding the British force. He reaches this conclusion by the most marvelous serious of garblings and misstatements. First, he says that the *Confiance* and the *Saratoga* were of nearly equal tonnage. The *Confiance* being captured was placed on our naval lists, where for years she ranked as a 36-gun frigate, while the *Saratoga* ranked among the 24-gun corvettes; and by actual measurement the former was half as large again as the latter. He gives the *Confiance* but 270 men; one of her officers, in a

letter published in the "London Naval Chronicle," [3] gives her over 300; more than that number of dead and prisoners were taken out of her. He misstates the calibre of her guns, and counts out two of them because they were used through the bow-ports; whereas, from the method in which she made her attack, these would have been peculiarly effective. The guns are given accurately by Cooper, on the authority of an officer,[4] who was on board the *Constitution* within 15 minutes after the *Linnet* struck, and who was in charge of her for two months.

Then James states that there were but 10 British galleys, while Sir George Prevost's official account, as well as all the American authorities, state the number to be 12. He says that the *Finch* grounded opposite an American battery before the engagement began, while in reality it was an hour afterward, and because she had been disabled by the shot of the American fleet. The galleys were largely manned by Canadians, and James, anxious to put the blame on these rather than the British, says that they acted in the most cowardly way, whereas in reality they caused the Americans more trouble than Downie's smaller sailing vessels did. His account of the armament of these vessels differs widely from the official reports. He gives the *Linnet* and *Chubb* a smaller number of men than the number of prisoners

[3] Vol. xxxii, p. 272. The letter also says that hardly five of her men remained unhurt.

[4] Lieutenant E. A. F. Lavallette.

that were actually taken out of them, not including the dead. Even misstating Downie's force in guns, underestimating the number of his men, and leaving out two of his gunboats, did not content James; and to make the figures show a proper disproportion, he says (Vol. VI, p. 504) that he shall exclude the *Finch* from the estimate, because she grounded, and half of the gunboats, because he does not think they acted bravely. Even were these assertions true, it would be quite as logical for an American writer to put the *Chesapeake's* crew down as only 200, and say he should exclude the other men from the estimate because they flinched; and to exclude all the guns that were disabled by shot, would be no worse than to exclude the *Finch*. James' manipulation of the figures is a really curious piece of audacity. Naturally, subsequent British historians have followed him without inquiry. James' account of this battle, alone, amply justifies our rejecting his narrative entirely, as far as affairs on the lakes go, whenever it conflicts with any other statement, British or American. Even when it does not conflict, it must be followed with extreme caution, for whenever he goes into figures the only thing certain about them is that they are wrong. He gives no details at all of most of the general actions. Of these, however, we already possess excellent accounts, the best being those in the "Manual of Naval Tactics," by Commander J. H. Ward, U. S. N. (1859), and in Lossing's "Field-Book of the War of 1812," and Cooper's "Naval History." The chief difficulty oc-

curs in connection with matters on Lake Ontario,[5] where I have been obliged to have recourse to a perfect patchwork of authors and even newspapers, for the details, using Niles' "Register" and James as mutual correctives. The armaments and equipments being so irregular I have not, as in other cases, made any allowance for the short weight of the American shot, as here the British may have suffered under a similar disadvantage; and it may be as well to keep in mind that on these inland waters the seamen of the two navies seem to have been as evenly matched in courage and skill as was possible. They were of exactly the same stock, with the sole exception that among and under, but entirely distinct from, the Canadian-English, fought the descendants of the conquered Canadian-French; and even these had been trained by Englishmen, were led by English captains, fought on ships built by English gold, and with English weapons and discipline.

[5] The accounts of the two commanders on Lake Ontario are as difficult to reconcile as are those of the contending admirals in the battles which the Dutch waged against the English and French during the years 1672-1675. In every one of De Ruyter's last six battles each side regularly claimed the victory, although there can be but little doubt that on the whole the strategical, and probably the tactical, advantage remained with De Ruyter. Every historian ought to feel a sense of the most lively gratitude toward Nelson; in his various encounters he never left any possible room for dispute as to which side had come out first best.

### ON LAKE ONTARIO

There being, as already explained, three independent centres of inland naval operations, the events at each will be considered separately.

At the opening of the war Lieutenant Woolsey, with the *Oneida*, was stationed at Sackett's Harbor, which was protected at the entrance by a small fort with a battery composed of one long 32. The Canadian squadron of six ships, mounting nearly 80 guns, was of course too strong to be meddled with. Indeed, had the *Royal George*, 22, the largest vessel, been commanded by a regular British sea-officer, she would have been perfectly competent to take both the *Oneida* and Sackett's Harbor; but before the Canadian commodore, Earle, made up his mind to attack, Lieut. Woolsey had time to make one or two short cruises, doing some damage among the merchant vessels of the enemy.

On the 19th of July Earle's ships appeared off the Harbor; the *Oneida* was such a dull sailor that it was useless for her to try to escape, so she was hauled up under a bank where she raked the entrance, and her off guns landed and mounted on the shore, while Lieut. Woolsey took charge of the "battery," or long 32, in the fort. The latter was the only gun that was of much use, for after a desultory cannonade of about an hour, Earle withdrew, having suffered very little damage, inflicting none at all, and proved himself and his subordinates to be grossly incompetent.

Acting under orders, Lieut. Woolsey now set about procuring merchant schooners to be fitted and used as gun-vessels until more regular cruisers could be built. A captured British schooner was christened the *Julia*, armed with a long 32 and two 6's, manned with 30 men, under Lieut. Henry Wells, and sent down to Ogdensburg. "On her way thither she encountered and actually beat off, without losing a man, the *Moira*, of 14, and *Gloucester*, of 10 guns."[6] Five other schooners were also purchased; the *Hamilton*, of 10 guns, being the largest, while the other four, the *Governor Tompkins*, *Growler*, *Conquest*, and *Pert* had but 11 pieces between them. Nothing is more difficult than to exactly describe the armaments of the smaller lake vessels. The American schooners were mere makeshifts, and their guns were frequently changed;[7] as soon as they could be dispensed with they were laid up, or sold, and forgotten.

It was even worse with the British, who manifested the most indefatigable industry in intermittently changing the armament, rig, and name of almost every vessel, and, the records being very loosely kept, it is hard to find what was the force

[6] James, vi, 350.

[7] They were always having accidents happen to them that necessitated some alteration. If a boat was armed with a long 32, she rolled too much, and they substituted a 14; if she also had an 18-pound carronade, it upset down the hatchway in the middle of a fight, and made way for a long 12, which burst as soon as it was used, and was replaced by two medium 6's. So a regular gamut of changes would be rung.

at any one time. A vessel which in one conflict was armed with long 18's, in the next would have replaced some of them with 68-pound carronades; or, beginning life as a ship, she would do most of her work as a schooner, and be captured as a brig, changing her name even oftener than anything else.

On the first of September Commodore Isaac Chauncy was appointed commander of the forces on the lakes (except of those on Lake Champlain), and he at once bent his energies to preparing an effective flotilla. A large party of ship-carpenters were immediately despatched to the Harbor; and they were soon followed by about a hundred officers and seamen, with guns, stores, etc. The keel of a ship to mount 24 32-pound carronades, and to be called the *Madison*, was laid down, and she was launched on the 26th of November, just when navigation had closed on account of the ice. Late in the autumn, four more schooners were purchased, and named the *Ontario*, *Scourge*, *Fair American*, and *Asp*, but these were hardly used until the following spring. The cruising force of the Americans was composed solely of the *Oneida* and the six schooners first mentioned. The British squadron was of nearly double this strength, and had it been officered and trained as it was during the ensuing summer, the Americans could not have stirred out of port. But as it was, it merely served as a kind of water militia, the very sailors, who subsequently did well, being then almost useless, and unable to oppose their well-disciplined foes, though the latter were so

inferior in number and force. For the reason that it was thus practically a contest of regulars against militia, I shall not give numerical comparisons of the skirmishes in the autumn of 1812, and shall touch on them but slightly. They teach the old lesson that, whether by sea or land, a small, well-officered, and well-trained force, can not, except very rarely, be resisted by a greater number of mere militia; and that in the end it is true economy to have the regular force prepared beforehand, without waiting until we have been forced to prepare it by the disasters happening to the irregulars. The Canadian seamen behaved badly, but no worse than the American land forces did at the same time; later, under regular training, both nations retrieved their reputations.

Commodore Chauncy arrived at Sackett's Harbor in October, and appeared on the lake on November 8th, in the *Oneida*, Lieutenant Woolsey, with the six schooners *Conquest*, Lieutenant Elliott; *Hamilton*, Lieutenant McPherson; *Tompkins*, Lieutenant Brown; *Pert*, Sailing-master Arundel; *Julia*, Sailing-master Trant; *Growler*, Sailing-master Mix. The Canadian vessels were engaged in conveying supplies from the westward. Commodore Chauncy discovered the *Royal George* off the False Duck Islands, and chased her under the batteries of Kingston, on the 9th. Kingston was too well defended to be taken by such a force as Chauncy's; but the latter decided to make a reconnaissance, to discover the enemy's means of defence and see if it was

possible to lay the *Royal George* aboard. At 3 P.M. the attack was made. The *Hamilton* and *Tompkins* were absent chasing, and did not arrive until the fighting had begun. The other four gunboats, *Conquest*, *Julia*, *Pert*, and *Growler*, led, in the order named, to open the attack with their heavy guns, and prepare the way for the *Oneida*, which followed. At the third discharge the *Pert's* gun burst, putting her nearly *hors de combat*, badly wounding her gallant commander, Mr. Arundel (who shortly afterward fell overboard and was drowned), and slightly wounding four of her crew. The other gunboats engaged the five batteries of the enemy, while the *Oneida* pushed on without firing a shot till at 3.40 she opened on the *Royal George*, and after 20 minutes' combat actually succeeded in compelling her opponent, though of double her force, to cut her cables, run in, and tie herself to a wharf, where some of her people deserted her; here she was under the protection of a large body of troops, and the Americans could not board her in face of the land forces. It soon began to grow dusk, and Chauncy's squadron beat out through the channel against a fresh head-wind. In this spirited attack the American loss had been confined to half a dozen men, and had fallen almost exclusively on the *Oneida*. The next day foul weather came on, and the squadron sailed for Sackett's Harbor. Some merchant vessels were taken, and the *Simco*, 8, was chased, but unsuccessfully.

The weather now became cold and tempestuous,

but cruising continued till the middle of November. The Canadian commanders, however, utterly refused to fight; the *Royal George* even fleeing from the *Oneida,* when the latter was entirely alone, and leaving the American commodore in undisputed command of the lake. Four of the schooners continued blockading Kingston till the middle of November; shortly afterward navigation closed.[8]

### LAKE ERIE

On Lake Erie there was no American naval force; but the army had fitted out a small brig, armed with six 6-pounders. This fell into the hands of the British at the capture of Detroit, and was named after that city, so that by the time a force of American officers and seamen arrived at the lake there was not a vessel on it for them to serve in, while their foes had eight. But we only have to deal with two of the latter at present. The *Detroit,* still mounting six 6-pounders, and with a crew of 56 men, under the command of Lieutenant of Marines Rolette, of the Royal Navy, assisted by a boatswain and gunner, and containing also 30 American prisoners, and the *Caledonia,* a small brig mounting two 4-pounders on pivots, with a crew of 12 men, Canadian-English, under Mr. Irvine, and having aboard also 10 American prisoners, and a very valuable cargo of furs, worth about $200,000, moved down

[8] These preliminary events were not very important, and the historians on both sides agree almost exactly, so that I have not considered it necessary to quote authorities.

the lake, and on Oct. 7th anchored under Fort Erie.[9]

Commander Jesse D. Elliott had been sent up to Erie some time before with instructions from Commodore Chauncy to construct a naval force, partly by building two brigs of 300 tons each,[10] and partly by purchasing schooners to act as gunboats. No sailors had yet arrived; but on the very day on which the two brigs moved down and anchored under Fort Erie, Captain Elliott received news that the first detachment of the promised seamen, 51 in number, including officers,[11] was but a few miles distant. He at once sent word to have these men hurried up, but when they arrivel they were found to have no arms, for which application was made to the military authorities. The latter not only gave a sufficiency of sabres, pistols, and muskets to the sailors, but also detailed enough soldiers, under Captain N. Towson and Lieutenant Isaac Roach, to make the total number of men that took part in the expedition 124. This force left Black Rock at one o'clock on the morning of the 8th in two large boats, one under the command of Commander Elliott, as-

[9] Letter of Captain Jesse D. Elliott to Secretary of Navy, Black Rock, Oct. 5, 1812.

[10] That is, of 300 tons actual capacity; measured as if they had been ordinary sea vessels they each tonned 480. Their opponent, the ship *Detroit*, similarly tonned 305, actual measurement, or 490, computing it in the ordinary manner.

[11] The number of men in this expedition is taken from Lossing's "Field-book of the War of 1812," by Benson J. Lossing, New York, 1869, p. 385, note, where a complete list of the names is given.

sisted by Lieutenant Roach, the other under Sailing-master George Watts and Captain Towson. After two hours' rowing they reached the foe, and the attack was made at three o'clock. Elliott laid his boat alongside the *Detroit* before he was discovered, and captured her after a very brief struggle, in which he lost but one man killed, and Midshipman J. C. Cummings wounded with a bayonet in the leg. The noise of the scuffle roused the hardy provincials aboard the *Caledonia*, and they were thus enabled to make a far more effectual resistance to Sailing-master Watts than the larger vessel had to Captain Elliott. As Watts pulled alongside he was greeted with a volley of musketry, but at once boarded and carried the brig, the twelve Canadians being cut down or made prisoners; one American was killed and four badly wounded. The wind was too light and the current too strong to enable the prizes to beat out and reach the lake, so the cables were cut and they ran down stream. The *Caledonia* was safely beached under the protection of an American battery near Black Rock. The *Detroit*, however, was obliged to anchor but four hundred yards from a British battery, which, together with some flying artillery, opened on her. Getting all his guns on the port side, Elliott kept up a brisk cannonade till his ammunition gave out, when he cut his cable and soon grounded on Squaw Island. Here the *Detroit* was commanded by the guns of both sides, and whichever party took possession of her was at once driven out by the other. The struggle ended in her

destruction, most of her guns being taken over to the American side. This was a very daring and handsome exploit, reflecting great credit on Commander Elliott, and giving the Americans, in the *Caledonia*, the nucleus of their navy on Lake Erie; soon afterward Elliott returned to Lake Ontario, a new detachment of seamen under Commander S. Angus having arrived.

On the 28th of November, the American general, Smith, despatched two parties to make an attack on some of the British batteries. One of these consisted of 10 boats, under the command of Captain King of the 15th infantry, with 150 soldiers, and with him went Mr. Angus with 82 sailors, including officers. The expedition left at one o'clock in the morning, but was discovered and greeted with a warm fire from a field battery placed in front of some British barracks known as the Red House. Six of the boats put back; but the other four, containing about a hundred men, dashed on. While the soldiers were forming line and firing, the seamen rushed in with their pikes and axes, drove off the British, captured their commander, Lieut. King, of the Royal Army, spiked and threw into the river the guns, and then took the barracks and burned them, after a desperate fight. Great confusion now ensued, which ended in Mr. Angus and some of the seamen going off in the boats. Several had been killed; eight, among whom were Midshipmen Wragg, Dudley, and Holdup, all under 20 years old, remained with the troops under Captain King, and having

utterly routed the enemy found themselves deserted by their friends. After staying on the shore a couple of hours some of them found two boats and got over; but Captain King and a few soldiers were taken prisoners. Thirty of the seamen, including nine of the twelve officers, were killed or wounded —among the former being Sailing-masters Sisson and Watts, and among the latter Mr. Angus, Sailing-master Carter, and Midshipmen Wragg, Holdup, Graham, Brailesford, and Irvine. Some twenty prisoners were secured and taken over to the American shore; the enemy's loss was more severe than ours, his resistance being very stubborn, and a good many cannon were destroyed, but the expedition certainly ended most disastrously. The accounts of it are hard to reconcile, but it is difficult to believe that Mr. Angus acted correctly.

Later in the winter Captain Oliver Hazard Perry arrived to take command of the forces on Lake Erie.

# CHAPTER V

## 1813

### ON THE OCEAN

Blockade of the American coast—The *Essex* in the South Pacific—The *Hornet* captures the *Peacock*—American privateers cut-out by British boats—Unsuccessful cruise of Commodore Rodgers—The *Chesapeake* is captured by the *Shannon*—Futile gunboat actions—Defence of Craney Island—Cutting-out expeditions—The *Argus* is captured by the *Pelican*—The *Enterprise* captures the *Boxer*—Summary

BY the beginning of the year 1813 the British had been thoroughly aroused by the American successes, and active measures were at once taken to counteract them. The force on the American station was largely increased, and a strict blockade begun, to keep the American frigates in port. The British frigates now cruised for the most part in couples and orders were issued by the Board of Admiralty that an 18-pounder frigate was not to engage an American 24-pounder. Exaggerated accounts of the American 44's being circulated, a new class of spar-deck frigates was constructed to meet them, rating 50 and mounting 60 guns; and some 74's were cut down for the same purpose.[1] These new ships were all much heavier than their intended opponents.

[1] James, vi, p. 206.

As New England's loyalty to the Union was, not unreasonably, doubted abroad, her coasts were at first troubled but little. A British squadron was generally kept cruising off the end of Long Island Sound, and another off Sandy Hook. Of course America had no means of raising a blockade, as each squadron contained generally a 74 or a razee, vessels too heavy for any in our navy to cope with. Frigates and sloops kept skirting the coasts of New Jersey, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Delaware Bay no longer possessed the importance it had during the Revolutionary War, and as the only war vessels in it were some miserable gunboats, the British generally kept but a small force on that station. Chesapeake Bay became the principal scene of their operations; it was there their main body collected, and their greatest efforts were made. In it a number of line-of-battle ships, frigates, sloops, and cutters had been collected, and early in the season Admiral Sir John Warren and Rear-Admiral Cockburn arrived to take command. The latter made numerous descents on the coast, and frequently came into contact with the local militia, who generally fled after a couple of volleys. These expeditions did not accomplish much, beyond burning the houses and driving off the live-stock of the farmers along shore, and destroying a few small towns—one of them, Hampton, being sacked with revolting brutality.[2] The Government of the United States

[2] James (vi, 340) says: The conduct of the British troops on this occasion was "revolting to human nature" and "disgraceful to the flag."

was, in fact, supported by the people in its war policy very largely on account of these excesses, which were much exaggerated by American writers. It was really a species of civil war, and in such a contest, at the beginning of this century, it was impossible that some outrages should not take place.

The American frigate *Constellation* had by this time got ready for sea, and, under the command of Captain Stewart, she prepared to put out early in January. As the number of blockaders rendered a fight almost certain within a few days of her departure, her crew were previously brought to the highest state of discipline, the men being exercised with especial care in handling the great guns and in firing at a target.[3] However, she never got out; for when she reached Hampton Roads she fell in with a British squadron of line-of-battle ships and frigates. She kedged up toward Norfolk, and when the tide rose ran in and anchored between the forts; and a few days later dropped down to cover the forts which were being built at Craney Island. Here she was exposed to attacks from the great British force still lying in Hampton Roads, and, fearing they would attempt to carry her by surprise, Captain Stewart made every preparation for defence. She was anchored in the middle of the narrow channel, flanked by gunboats, her lower ports closed, not a rope left hanging over the sides; the boarding nettings, boiled in half-made pitch till they were as

[3] Life of Commodore Tatnall, by C. C. Jones (Savannah, 1878), p. 15.

hard as wire, were triced out-board toward the yard-arms, and loaded with kentledge to fall on the attacking boats when the tricing lines were cut, while the carronades were loaded to the muzzle with musket balls, and depressed so as to sweep the water near the ship.[4] Twice, a force of British, estimated by their foes to number 2,000 men, started off at night to carry the *Constellation* by surprise; but on each occasion they were discovered and closely watched by her guard-boats, and they never ventured to make the attack. However, she was unable to get to sea, and remained blockaded to the close of the war.

At the beginning of the year several frigates and smaller craft were at sea. The *Chesapeake,* Captain Evans, had sailed from Boston on Dec. 13, 1812.[5] She ran down past Madeira, the Canaries, and Cape de Verde, crossed the equator, and for six weeks cruised to the south of the line between longitudes 16° to 25° W. Thence she steered to the west, passing near Surinam, over the same spot on which the *Hornet* had sunk the *Peacock* but a day previous. Cruising northward through the West Indies, she passed near the Bermudas, where she was chased by a 74 and a frigate; escaping from them she got into Boston on April 9th, having captured five merchantmen, and chased unsuccessfully for two days a brig-sloop. The term of two years for which her crew

[4] For an admirable account of these preparations, as well as of the subsequent events, see Cooper, ii, 242.

[5] Statistical "History of the U. S. Navy," by Lieutenant C. E. Emmons.

were enlisted now being up, they, for the most part, left, in consequence of some trouble about the prize-money. Captain Evans being in ill health, Captain James Lawrence was appointed to command her. He reached Boston about the middle of May[6] and at once set about enlisting a new crew, and tried, with but partial success, to arrange matters with the old sailors, who were now almost in open mutiny.

When the year 1812 had come to an end, the *Essex*, 32, was in the South Atlantic, and Captain Porter shortly afterward ran into St. Catherines to water. Being at a loss where to find his consorts, he now decided to adopt the exceedingly bold measure of doubling Cape Horn and striking at the British whalers in the Pacific. This was practically going into the enemy's waters, the Portuguese and Spanish countries being entirely under the influence of Britain, while there were no stations where Porter could revictual or repair in safety. However, the *Essex* started, doubled the Horn, and on March 13th anchored in the harbor of Valparaiso. Her adventurous cruise in the Pacific was the most striking feature of the war; but as it has been most minutely described by Commodore Porter himself, by his son, Admiral Porter, by Admiral Farragut, and by Cooper, I shall barely touch upon it.

[6] He was still on the *Hornet* at New York on May 10th, as we knew from a letter of Biddle's, written on that date (in letters of "Masters-Commandant," 1813, No. 58), and so could hardly have been with the *Chesapeake* two weeks before he put out; and had to get his crew together and train them during that time.

On March 20th the *Essex* captured the Peruvian corsair *Nereyda,* 16, hove her guns and small arms overboard, and sent her into port. She made the island of San Gallan, looked into Callao, and thence went to the Gallipagos, getting everything she wanted from her prizes. Then she went to Tumbez, and returned to the Gallipagos; thence to the Marquesas, and finally back to Valparaiso again. By this year's campaign in the Pacific, Captain Porter had saved all our ships in those waters, had not cost the government a dollar, living purely on the enemy, and had taken from him nearly 4,000 tons of shipping and 400 men, completely breaking up his whaling trade in the South Pacific.

The cruise was something *sui generis* in modern warfare, recalling to mind the cruises of the early English and Dutch navigators. An American ship was at a serious disadvantage in having no harbor of refuge away from home; while on almost every sea there were British, French, and Spanish ports into which vessels of those nations could run for safety. It was an unprecedented thing for a small frigate to cruise a year and a half in an enemy's waters, and supply herself during that time, purely from captured vessels, with everything—cordage, sails, guns, anchors, provisions, and medicines, and even money to pay the officers and men! Porter's cruise was the very model of what such an expedition should be, harassing the enemy most effectually at no cost whatever. Had the *Essex* been decently armed with long guns, instead of carronades, the

end might have been as successful as it was glorious. The whalers were many of them armed letters-of-marque, and, though of course unable to oppose the frigate, several times smart skirmishes occurred in attacking them with boats, or in captured ships; as when Lieutenant Downs and 20 men in the prize *Georgiana* after a short brush captured the *Hector,* with 25 men, two of whom were killed and six wounded; and when, under similar circumstances, the prize *Greenwich*, of 25 men, captured the *Seringapatam* of 40. The cruise of the *Essex,* the first American man-of-war ever in the Pacific, a year and a half out and many thousand miles away from home, was a good proof of Porter's audacity in planning the trip and his skill and resource in carrying it out.

To return now to the *Hornet.* This vessel had continued blockading the *Bonne Citoyenne* until January 24th, when the *Montagu*, 74, arrived toward evening and chased her into port. As the darkness came on the *Hornet* wore, stood out to sea, passing into the open without molestation from the 74, and then steered toward the northeast, cruising near the coast, and making a few prizes, among which was a brig, the *Resolution,* with $23,000 in specie aboard, captured on February 14th. On the 24th of February, while nearing the mouth of the Demerara River, Captain Lawrence discovered a brig to leeward, and chased her till he ran into quarter less five, when, having no pilot, he hauled offshore. Just within the bar a man-of-war brig was

lying at anchor; and while beating round Caroband Bank, in order to get at her, Captain Lawrence discovered another sail edging down on his weather-quarter.[7] The brig at anchor was the *Espiègle*, of 18 guns, 32-pound carronades, Captain John Taylor;[8] and the second brig seen was the *Peacock*, Captain William Peake,[9] which, for some unknown reason, had exchanged her 32-pound carronades for 24's. She had sailed from the *Espiègle's* anchorage the same morning at 10 o'clock. At 4.20 P.M. the *Peacock* hoisted her colors; then the *Hornet* beat to quarters and cleared for action. Captain Lawrence kept close by the wind, in order to get the weather-gage; when he was certain he could weather the enemy, he tacked, at 5.10, and the *Hornet* hoisted her colors. The ship and the brig now stood for each other, both on the wind, the *Hornet* being on the starboard and the *Peacock* on the port tack, and at 5.25 they exchanged broadsides, at half pistol-shot distance, while going in opposite directions, the Americans using their lee and the British their weather battery. The guns were fired as they bore, and the *Peacock* suffered severely, while her antagonist's hull was uninjured, though she suffered slightly aloft and had her pennant cut off by the first shot fired.[10] One of the men in the mizzen-top was killed by a round shot, and two more were wounded in the main-top.[11] As soon as they were

[7] Letter of Captain Lawrence, March 29, 1813.
[8] James, vi, 278. [9] Do. [10] Cooper, p. 200.
[11] See entry in her log for the day (In "Log-Book of

clear, Captain Peake put his helm hard up and wore, firing his starboard guns; but the *Hornet* had watched him closely, bore up as quickly, and coming down at 5.35, ran him close aboard on the starboard quarter. Captain Peake fell at this moment, together with many of his crew, and, unable to withstand the *Hornet's* heavy fire, the *Peacock* surrendered at 5.39, just 14 minutes after the first shot; and directly afterward hoisted her ensign union down in the fore-rigging as a signal of distress. Almost immediately her mainmast went by the board. Both vessels then anchored, and Lieutenant J. T. Shubrick, being sent on board the prize, reported her sinking. Lieutenant D. Connor was then sent in another boat to try to save the vessel; but though they threw the guns overboard, plugged the shot holes, tried the pumps, and even attempted bailing, the water gained so rapidly that the *Hornet's* officers devoted themselves to removing the wounded and other prisoners; and while thus occupied the short tropical twilight left them. Immediately afterward the prize settled, suddenly and easily, in 5½ fathoms of water, carrying with her three of the *Hornet's* people and nine of her own, who were rummaging below; meanwhile four others of her crew had lowered her damaged stern boat, and in the confusion got off unobserved and made their way to the land. The foretop still remained above water, and four of the prisoners saved themselves

*Hornet*, *Wasp*, and *Argus*, from July 20, 1809, to October 6, 1813,") in the Bureau of Navigation, at Washington.

by running up the rigging into it. Lieutenant Connor and Midshipman Cooper (who had also come on board) saved themselves, together with most of their people and the remainder of the Peacock's crew, by jumping into the launch, which was lying on the booms, and paddling her toward the ship with pieces of boards in default of oars.

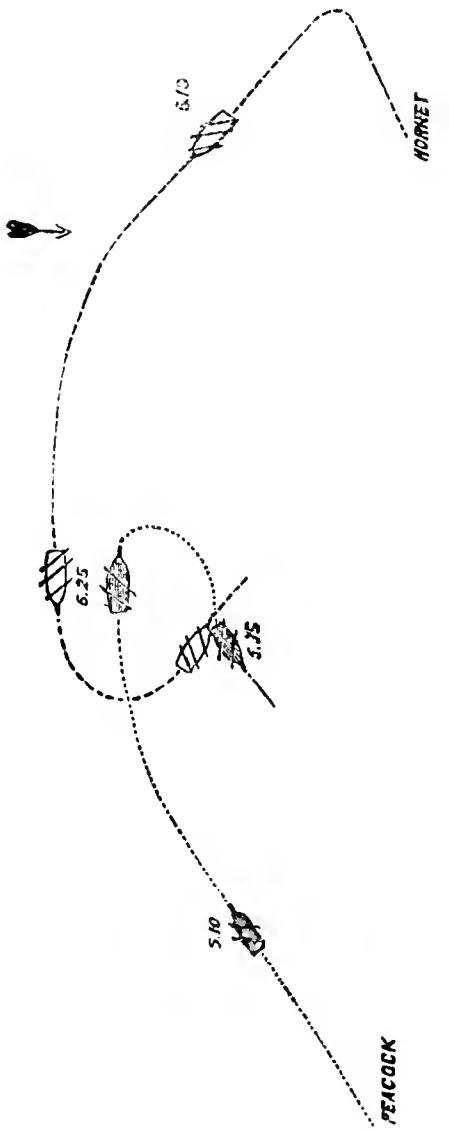
The *Hornet's* complement at this time was 150, of whom she had 8 men absent in a prize and 7 on the sick list,[12] leaving 135 fit for duty in the action;[13] of these one man was killed, and two wounded, all aloft. Her rigging and sails were a good deal cut, a shot had gone through the foremast, and the bowsprit was slightly damaged; the only shot that touched her hull merely glanced athwart her bows, indenting a plank beneath the cat-head. The *Peacock's* crew had amounted to 134, but 4 were absent in a prize, and but 122[14] fit for action; of these she lost her captain, and seven men killed and mortally wounded, and her master, one midshipman, and 28 men severely and slightly wounded,—in all 8 killed and 30 wounded, or about 13 times her antagonist's loss. She suffered under the disadvantage of light metal, having 24's opposed to 32's; but judging from her gunnery this was not much of a loss, as 6-pounders would have inflicted nearly as great damage. She was well handled and bravely fought; but her men showed

[12] Letter of Captain Lawrence.

[13] Letter of Lieutenant D. Conner, April 26, 1813.

[14] Letter of Lieutenant F. W. Wright (of the *Peacock*), April 17, 1813.

a marvelous ignorance of gunnery. It appears that she had long been known as "the yacht," on ac-




count of the tasteful arrangement of her deck; the breechings of the carronades were lined with white canvas, and nothing could exceed in brilliancy the

polish upon the traversing bars and elevating screws.[15] In other words, Captain Peake had confounded the mere *incidents* of good discipline with the essentials.[16]

The *Hornet's* victory can not be regarded in any other light than as due, *not* to the heavier metal, but to the far more accurate firing of the Americans; "had the guns of the *Peacock* been of the largest size they could not have changed the result, as the weight of shot that do not hit is of no great moment." Any merchant-ship might have been as well handled and bravely defended as she was; and an ordinary letter-of-marque would have made as creditable a defence.

During the entire combat the *Espiègle* was not more than 4 miles distant and was plainly visible from the *Hornet;* but for some reason she did not come out, and her commander reported that he knew nothing of the action till the next day. Captain Lawrence of course was not aware of this, and made such exertions to bend on new sails, stow his boats, and clear his decks that by nine o'clock he was again prepared for action,[17] and at 2 P.M. got under way for the N.W. Being now overcrowded with people and short of water he stood for home, anchoring at Holmes' Hole in Martha's Vineyard on the 19th of March.

On their arrival at New York the officers of the

[15] James, vi, 280.

[16] Codrington ("Memoirs," i, 310) comments very forcibly on the uselessness of a mere martinet.

[17] Letter of Captain Lawrence.

*Peacock* published a card expressing in the warmest terms their appreciation of the way they and their men had been treated. Say they: "We ceased to consider ourselves prisoners; and everything that friendship could dictate was adopted by you and the officers of the *Hornet* to remedy the inconvenience we would otherwise have experienced from the unavoidable loss of the whole of our property and clothes owing to the sudden sinking of the *Peacock*."[18] This was signed by the first and second lieutenants, the master, surgeon and purser.

| | Tonnage | Guns | Weight Metal | Men | Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hornet* | 480 | 10 | 279 | 135 | 3 |
| *Peacock* | 477 | 10 | 210 | 122 | 38 |

| | Relative Force | Relative Loss Inflicted |
|---|---|---|
| *Hornet* | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| *Peacock* | .83 | .08 |

That is, the forces standing nearly as 13 is to 11, the relative execution was about as 13 is to 1.

The day after the capture Captain Lawrence reported 277 souls aboard, including the crew of the English brig *Resolution* which he had taken, and of the American brig *Hunter*, prize to the *Peacock*. As James, very ingeniously, tortures these figures into meaning what they did not, it may be well to show exactly what the 277 included. Of the *Hornet's* original crew of 150, 8 were absent in a prize, 1 killed, and 3 drowned, leaving (including 7 sick) 138; of the *Peacock's* original 134, 4 were absent

[18] Quoted in full in Niles' "Register" and Lossing's "Field Book."

in a prize, 5 killed, 9 drowned, and 4 escaped, leaving (including 8 sick and 3 mortally wounded) 112; there were also aboard 16 other British prisoners, and the *Hunter's* crew of 11 men—making just 277.[19] According to Lieutenant Connor's letter, written in response to one from Lieutenant Wright, there were in reality 139 in the *Peacock's* crew when she began action; but it is, of course, best to take each commander's account of the number of men on board his ship that were fit for duty.

On January 17th the *Viper*, 12, Lieutenant J. D. Henly, was captured by the British frigate *Narcissus*, 32, Captain Lumly.

On February 8th, while a British squadron, consisting of the four frigates *Belvidera* (Captain Richard Byron), *Maidstone*, *Junon*, and *Statira*, were at anchor in Lynnhaven Bay, a schooner was observed in the northeast standing down Chesapeake Bay.[20] This was the *Lottery*, letter-of-marque, of six 12-pounder carronades and 25 men, Captain John Southcomb, bound from Baltimore to Bombay. Nine boats, with 200 men, under the command of Lieutenant Kelly Nazer, were sent against her, and, a calm coming on, over-

[19] The 277 men were thus divided into: *Hornet's* crew, 138; *Peacock's* crew, 112; *Resolution's* crew, 16; *Hunter's* crew, 11. James quotes "270" men, which he divides as follows: *Hornet*, 160; *Peacock*, 101; *Hunter*, 9—leaving out the *Resolution's* crew, 11 of the *Peacock's*, and 2 of the *Hunter's*.

[20] James, vi, 325.

took her. The schooner opened a well-directed fire of round and grape, but the boats rushed forward and boarded her, not carrying her till after a most obstinate struggle, in which Captain Southcomb and 19 of his men, together with 13 of the assailants, were killed or wounded. The best warship of a regular navy might be proud of the discipline and courage displayed by the captain and crew of the little *Lottery*. Captain Byron on this, as well as on many another occasion, showed himself to be as humane as he was brave and skilful. Captain Southcomb, mortally wounded, was taken on board Byron's frigate, where he was treated with the greatest attention and most delicate courtesy, and when he died his body was sent ashore with every mark of the respect due to so brave an officer. Captain Stewart (of the *Constellation*) wrote Captain Byron a letter of acknowledgment for his great courtesy and kindness.[21]

On March 16th a British division of five boats and 105 men, commanded by Lieutenant James Polkinghorne, set out to attack the privateer schooner *Dolphin* of 12 guns and 70 men, and the letters-of-marque, *Racer, Arab*, and *Lynx*, each of six guns and 30 men. Lieutenant Polkinghorne, after pulling 15 miles, found the four schooners all prepared to receive him, but in spite of his great inferiority in force he dashed gallantly at them.

[21] The correspondence between the two captains is given in full in Niles' "Register," which also contains fragmentary notes on the action, principally as to the loss incurred.

The *Arab* and *Lynx* surrendered at once; the *Racer* was carried after a sharp struggle in which Lieutenant Polkinghorne was wounded, and her guns turned on the *Dolphin*. Most of the latter's crew jumped overboard; a few rallied round their captain, but they were at once scattered as the British seamen came aboard. The assailants had 13, and the privateersmen 16 men killed and wounded in the fight. It was certainly one of the most brilliant and daring cutting-out expeditions that took place during the war, and the victors well deserved their success. The privateersmen (according to the statement of the *Dolphin's* master, in "Niles' Register,") were panic-struck, and acted in anything but a brave manner. All irregular fighting-men do their work by fits and starts. No regular cruisers could behave better than did the privateers *Lottery*, *Chasseur*, and *General Armstrong;* none would behave as badly as the *Dolphin*, *Lynx*, and *Arab*. The same thing appears on shore. Jackson's irregulars at New Orleans did as well, or almost as well, as Scott's troops at Lundy's Lane; but Scott's troops would never have suffered from such a panic as overcame the militia at Bladensburg.

On April 9th the schooner *Norwich*, of 14 guns and 61 men, Sailing-master James Monk, captured the British privateer *Caledonia*, of 10 guns and 41 men, after a short action in which the privateer lost 7 men.

On April 30th Commodore Rodgers, in the *President*, 44, accompanied by Captain Smith in

the *Congress*, 38, sailed on his third cruise.[22] On May 2d he fell in with and chased the British sloop *Curlew*, 18, Captain Michael Head, but the latter escaped by knocking away the wedges of her masts and using other means to increase her rate of sailing. On the 8th, in latitude 39° 30′ N., long. 60° W., the *Congress* parted company, and sailed off toward the southeast, making four prizes, of no great value, in the North Atlantic;[23] when about in long. 35° W. she steered south, passing to the south of the line. But she never saw a man-of-war, and during the latter part of her cruise not a sail of any kind, and after cruising nearly eight months returned to Portsmouth Harbor on December 14th, having captured but four merchantmen. Being unfit to cruise longer, owing to her decayed condition, she was disarmed and laid up; nor was she sent to sea again during the war.[24]

Meanwhile Rodgers cruised along the eastern edge of the Grand Bank until he reached latitude 48°, without meeting anything, then stood to the southeast, and cruised off the Azores till June 6th.

[22] Letter of Commodore Rodgers, Sept. 30, 1813.

[23] Letter of Captain Smith, Dec. 15, 1813.

[24] James states that she was "blockaded" in port by the *Tenedos* during part of 1814, but was too much awed by the fate of the *Chesapeake* to come out during the "long blockade" of Captain Parker. Considering the fact that she was too decayed to put to sea, had no guns aboard, no crew, and was, in fact, laid up, the feat of the *Tenedos* was not very wonderful; a row-boat could have "blockaded" her quite as well. It is worth noticing, as an instance of the way James alters a fact by suppressing half of it.

Then he crowded sail to the northeast after a Jamaica fleet of which he had received news, but which he failed to overtake, and on June 13th, in lat. 46°, long. 28°, he gave up the chase and shaped his course toward the North Sea, still without any good luck befalling him. On June 27th he put into North Bergen in the Shetlands for water, and thence passed the Orkneys and stretched toward the North Cape, hoping to intercept the Archangel fleet. On July 19th, when off the North Cape, in lat. 71° 52′ N., long. 20° 18′ E., he fell in with two sails of the enemy, who made chase; after four days' pursuit the commodore ran his opponents out of sight. According to his letter the two sail were a line-of-battle ship and a frigate; according to James they were the 12-pounder frigate *Alexandria*, Captain Carthcart, and *Spitfire*, 16, Captain Ellis. James quotes from the logs of the two British ships, and it would seem that he is correct, as it would not be possible for him to falsify the logs so utterly. In case he is true, it was certainly carrying caution to an excessive degree for the commodore to retreat before getting some idea of what his antagonists really were. His mistaking them for so much heavier ships was a precisely similar error to that made by Sir George Collier and Lord Stuart at a later date about the *Cyane* and *Levant*. James wishes to prove that each party perceived the force of the other, and draws a contrast (p. 312) between the "gallantry of one party and pusillanimity of the other." This is nonsense, and, as in similar

cases, James overreaches himself by proving too much. If he had made an 18-pounder frigate like the *Congress* flee from another 18-pounder, his narrative would be within the bounds of possibility and would need serious examination. But the little 12-pounder *Alexandria*, and the ship-sloop with her 18-pound carronades, would not have stood the ghost of a chance in the contest. Any man who would have been afraid of them would also have been afraid of the *Little Belt*, the sloop Rodgers captured before the war. As for Captains Cathcart and Ellis, had they known the force of the *President*, and chased her with a view of attacking her, their conduct would have only been explicable on the ground that they were afflicted with emotional insanity.

The *President* now steered southward and got into the mouth of the Irish Channel; on August 2d she shifted her berth and almost circled Ireland; then steered across to Newfoundland, and worked south along the coast. On September 23d, a little south of Nantucket, she decoyed under her guns and captured the British schooner *Highflyer*, 6, Lieut. William Hutchinson, and 45 men; and went into Newport on the 27th of the same month, having made some 12 prizes.

On May 24th Commodore Decatur in the *United States*, which had sent ashore six carronades, and now mounted but 48 guns, accompanied by Captain Jones in the *Macedonian*, 38, and Captain Biddle in the *Wasp*, 20, left New York, passing through Hell

Gate, as there was a large blockading force off the Hook. Opposite Hunter's Point the main-mast of the *States* was struck by lightning, which cut off the broad pendant, shot down the hatchway into the doctor's cabin, put out his candle, ripped up the bed, and entering between the skin and ceiling of the ship tore off two or three sheets of copper near the water-line, and disappeared without leaving a trace! The *Macedonian,* which was close behind, hove all aback, in expectation of seeing the *States* blown up.

At the end of the Sound, Commodore Decatur anchored to watch for a chance of getting out. Early on June 1st he started; but in a couple of hours met the British Captain R. D. Oliver's squadron, consisting of a 74, a razee, and a frigate. These chased him back, and all his three ships ran into New London. Here, in the mud of the Thames River, the two frigates remained blockaded till the close of the war; but the little sloop slipped out later, to the enemy's cost.

We left the *Chesapeake,* 38, being fitted out at Boston by Captain James Lawrence, late of the *Hornet.* Most of her crew, as already stated, their time being up, left, dissatisfied with the ship's ill luck, and angry at not having received their due share of prize-money. It was very hard to get sailors, most of the men preferring to ship in some of the numerous privateers where the discipline was less strict and the chance of prize-money much greater. In consequence of this an unusually large number of

foreigners had to be taken, including about forty British and a number of Portuguese. The latter were peculiarly troublesome; one of their number, a boatswain's mate, finally almost brought about a mutiny among the crew, which was only pacified by giving the men prize-checks. A few of the *Constitution's* old crew came aboard, and these, together with some of the men who had been on the *Chesapeake* during her former voyage, made an excellent nucleus. Such men needed very little training at either guns or sails; but the new hands were unpracticed, and came on board so late that the last draft that arrived still had their hammocks and bags lying in the boats stowed over the booms when the ship was captured. The officers were largely new to the ship, though the first lieutenant, Mr. A. Ludlow, had been the third in her former cruise: the third and fourth lieutenants were not regularly commissioned as such, but were only midshipmen acting for the first time in higher positions. Captain Lawrence himself was of course new to all, both officers and crew.[25] In other words, the *Chesapeake* possessed good material, but in an exceedingly unseasoned state.

[25] On the day on which he sailed to attack the *Shannon*, Lawrence writes to the Secretary of the Navy as follows: "Lieutenant Paige is so ill as to be unable to go to sea with the ship. At the urgent request of Acting-Lieutenant Pierce I have granted him, also, permission to go on shore; one inducement for my granting his request was his being at variance with every officer in his mess." "Captains' Letters," vol. 20, No. 1, in the Naval Archives at Washington. Neither officers nor men had shaken together.

Meanwhile the British frigate *Shannon,* 38, Captain Philip Bowes Vere Broke, was cruising off the mouth of the harbor. To give some idea of the reason why she proved herself so much more formidable than her British sister frigate it may be well to quote, slightly condensing, from James:

"There was another point in which the generality of British crews, as compared with any one American crew, were miserably deficient; that is, skill in the art of gunnery. While the American seamen were constantly firing at marks, the British seamen, except in particular cases, scarcely did so once in a year; and some ships could be named on board which not a shot had been fired in this way for upward of three years. Nor was the fault wholly the captain's. The instructions under which he was bound to act forbade him to use, during the first six months after the ship had received her armament, more shots per month than amounted to a third in number of the upper-deck guns; and, after these six months, only half the quantity. Many captains never put a shot in the guns till an enemy appeared; they employed the leisure time of the men in handling the sails and in decorating the ship." Captain Broke was not one of this kind. "From the day on which he had joined her, the 14th of September, 1806, the *Shannon* began to feel the effect of her captain's proficiency as a gunner and zeal for the service. The laying of the ship's ordnance so that it may be correctly fired in a horizontal direction is justly deemed a most important operation, as upon it de-

pends in a great measure the true aim and destructive effect of the shot; this was attended to by Captain Broke in person. By draughts from other ships, and the usual means to which a British man-of-war is obliged to resort, the *Shannon* got together a crew; and in the course of a year or two, by the paternal care and excellent regulations of Captain Broke, the ship's company became as pleasant to command as it was dangerous to meet." The *Shannon's* guns were all carefully sighted, and, moreover, "every day, for about an hour and a half in the forenoon, when not prevented by chase or the state of the weather, the men were exercised at training the guns, and for the same time in the afternoon in the use of the broadsword, pike, musket, etc. Twice a week the crew fired at targets, both with great guns and musketry; and Captain Broke, as an additional stimulus beyond the emulation excited, gave a pound of tobacco to every man that put a shot through the bull's eye." He would frequently have a cask thrown overboard and suddenly order some one gun to be manned to sink the cask. In short, the *Shannon* was very greatly superior, thanks to her careful training, to the average British frigate of her rate, while the *Chesapeake*, owing to her having a raw and inexperienced crew, was decidedly inferior to the average American frigate of the same strength.

In force the two frigates compared pretty equally,[26] the American being the superior in just

[26] Taking each commander's account for his own force.

about the same proportion that the *Wasp* was to the *Frolic,* or, at a later date, the *Hornet* to the *Penguin.* The *Chesapeake* carried 50 guns (26 in broadside), 28 long 18's on the gun-deck, and on the spar-deck two long 12's, one long 18, eighteen 32-pound carronades, and one 12-pound carronade (which was not used in the fight, however). Her broadside, allowing for the short weight of metal, was 542 lbs.; her complement, 379 men. The *Shannon* carried 52 guns (26 in broadside), 28 long 18's on the gun-deck, and on the spar-deck four long 9's, one long 6, 16 32-pound carronades, and three 12-pound carronades (two of which were not used in the fight). Her broadside was 550 lbs.; her crew consisted of 330 men, 30 of whom were raw hands. Early on the morning of June 1st, Captain Broke sent in to Captain Lawrence, by an American prisoner, a letter of challenge, which for courteousness, manliness, and candor is the very model of what such an epistle should be. Before it reached Boston, however, Captain Lawrence had weighed anchor, to attack the *Shannon,* which frigate was in full sight in the offing. It has been often said that he engaged against his judgment, but this may be doubted. His experience with the *Bonne Citoyenne, Espiègle* and *Peacock* had not tended to give him a very high idea of the navy to which he was opposed, and there is no doubt that he was confident of capturing the *Shannon.*[27] It was most unfortu-

[27] In his letter written just before sailing (already quoted on p. 221) he says: "An English frigate is now in sight from

nate that he did not receive Broke's letter, as the latter in it expressed himself willing to meet Lawrence in any latitude and longitude he might appoint; and there would thus have been some chance of the American crew having time enough to get into shape.

At midday of June 1, 1812, the *Chesapeake* weighed anchor, stood out of Boston Harbor, and at 1 P.M. rounded the Light-house. The *Shannon* stood off under easy sail, and at 3.40 hauled up and reefed top-sails. At 4 P.M. she again bore away with her foresail brailed up, and her main top-sail braced flat and shivering, that the *Chesapeake* might overtake her. An hour later, Boston Light-house bearing west distant about six leagues, she again hauled up, with her head to the southeast, and lay to under top-sail, top-gallant sails, jib, and spanker. Meanwhile, as the breeze freshened the *Chesapeake* took in her studding-sails, top-gallant sails, and royals, got her royal yards on deck, and came down very fast under top-sails and jib. At 5.30, to keep under command and be able to wear if necessary, the *Shannon* filled her main top-sail and kept a close luff, and then again let the sail shiver. At 5.25 the *Chesapeake* hauled up her foresail, and with

our deck. . . . I am in hopes to give a good account of her before night." My account of the action is mainly taken from James' "Naval History" and Brighton's "Memoir of Admiral Broke" (according to which the official letter of Captain Broke was tampered with); see also the letter of Lieut. George Budd, June 15, 1813; the report of the Court of Inquiry, Commodore Bainbridge presiding, and the court-martial held on board frigate *United States*, April 15, 1814, Commodore Decatur presiding.

three ensigns flying, steered straight for the *Shannon's* starboard quarter. Broke was afraid that Lawrence would pass under the *Shannon's* stern, rake her, and engage her on the quarter; but either overlooking or waiving this advantage, the American captain luffed up within 50 yards upon the *Shannon's* starboard quarter, and squared his main-yard. On board the *Shannon* the captain of the 14th gun, William Mindham, had been ordered not to fire till it bore into the second main-deck port forward; at 5.50 it was fired, and then the other guns in quick succession from aft forward, the *Chesapeake* replying with her whole broadside. At 5.53 Lawrence, finding he was forging ahead, hauled up a little. The *Chesapeake's* broadsides were doing great damage, but she herself was suffering even more than her foe; the men in the *Shannon's* tops could hardly see the deck of the American frigate through the clouds of splinters, hammocks, and other wreck that was flying across it. Man after man was killed at the wheel; the fourth lieutenant, the master, and the boatswain were slain; and at 5.56, having had her jib sheet and foretop-sail tie shot away, and her spanker brails loosened so that the sail blew out, the *Chesapeake* came up into the wind somewhat, so as to expose her quarter to her antagonist's broadside, which beat in her stern-ports and swept the men from the after guns. One of the arm chests on the quarter-deck was blown up by a hand-grenade thrown from the *Shannon*.[28] The *Chesapeake* was

[28] This explosion may have had more effect than is commonly supposed in the capture of the *Chesapeake*. Commo-

now seen to have stern-way on and to be paying slowly off; so the *Shannon* put her helm a-starboard and shivered her mizzen top-sail, so as to keep off the wind and delay the boarding. But at that moment her jib stay was shot away, and, her headsails becoming becalmed, she went off very slowly. In consequence, at 6 P.M. the two frigates fell aboard, the *Chesapeake's* quarter pressing upon the *Shannon's* side just forward the starboard main-chains, and the frigates were kept in this position by the fluke of the *Shannon's* anchor catching in the *Chesapeake's* quarter port.

The *Shannon's* crew had suffered severely, but not the least panic or disorder existed among them. Broke ran forward, and seeing his foes flinching from the quarter-deck guns, he ordered the ships to be lashed together, the great guns to cease firing, and the boarders to be called. The boatswain, who had fought in Rodney's action, set about fastening

dore Bainbridge, writing from Charlestown, Mass., on June 2, 1813 (see "Captains' Letters," vol. xxix, No. 10), says: "Mr. Knox, the pilot on board, left the *Chesapeake* at 5 P.M. . . . At 6 P.M., Mr. Knox informs me, the fire opened, and at 12 minutes past six both ships were laying alongside one another as if in the act of boarding; at that moment an explosion took place on board the *Chesapeake*, which spread a fire on her upper deck from the foremast to the mizzen-mast, as high as her tops, and enveloped both ships in smoke for several minutes. After it cleared away they were seen separate, with the British flag hoisted on board the *Chesapeake* over the American." James denies that the explosion was caused by a hand-grenade, though he says there were some of these aboard the *Shannon*. It is a point of no interest.

the vessels together, which the grim veteran succeeded in doing, though his right arm was literally hacked off by a blow from a cutlass. All was confusion and dismay on board the *Chesapeake*. Lieutenant Ludlow had been mortally wounded and carried below; Lawrence himself, while standing on the quarter-deck, fatally conspicuous by his full-dress uniform and commanding stature, was shot down, as the vessels closed, by Lieutenant Law of the British marines. He fell dying, and was carried below, exclaiming: "Don't give up the ship" —a phrase that has since become proverbial among his countrymen. The third lieutenant, Mr. W. S. Cox, came on deck, but utterly demoralized by the aspect of affairs, he basely ran below without staying to rally the men, and was court-martialed afterward for so doing. At 6.02 Captain Broke stepped from the *Shannon's* gangway rail on to the muzzle of the *Chesapeake's* aftermost carronade, and thence over the bulwark on to her quarter-deck, followed by about 20 men. As they came aboard, the *Chesapeake's* foreign mercenaries and the raw natives of the crew deserted their quarters; the Portuguese boatswain's mate removed the gratings of the berth-deck, and he ran below, followed by many of the crew, among them one of the midshipmen named Deforest. On the quarter-deck almost the only man that made any resistance was the chaplain, Mr. Livermore, who advanced, firing his pistol at Broke, and in return nearly had his arm hewed off by a stroke from the latter's broad Toledo blade. On

the upper deck the only men who behaved well were the marines, but of their original number of 44 men, 14, including Lieutenant James Broom and Corporal Dixon, were dead, and 20, including Sergeants Twin and Harris, wounded, so that there were left but one corporal and nine men, several of whom had been knocked down and bruised, though reported unwounded. There was thus hardly any resistance, Captain Broke stopping his men for a moment till they were joined by the rest of the boarders under Lieutenants Watt and Falkiner. The *Chesapeake's* mizzen-topmen began firing at the boarders, mortally wounding a midshipman, Mr. Samwell, and killing Lieutenant Watt; but one of the *Shannon's* long nines was pointed at the top and cleared it out, being assisted by the English main-topmen, under Midshipman Coshnahan. At the same time the men in the *Chesapeake's* main-top were driven out of it by the fire of the *Shannon's* fore-topmen, under Midshipman Smith. Lieutenant George Budd, who was on the main-deck, now for the first time learned that the English had boarded, as the upper-deck men came crowding down, and at once called on his people to follow him; but the foreigners and novices held back, and only a few of the veterans followed him up. As soon as he reached the spar-deck, Budd, followed by only a dozen men, attacked the British as they came along the gangways, repulsing them for a moment, and killing the British purser, Aldham, and captain's clerk, Dunn; but the handful of Americans were at

once cut down or dispersed, Lieutenant Budd being wounded and knocked down the main hatchway. "The enemy," writes Captain Broke, "fought desperately, but in disorder." Lieutenant Ludlow, already mortally wounded, struggled up on deck, followed by two or three men, but was at once disabled by a sabre cut. On the forecastle a few seamen and marines turned to bay. Captain Broke was still leading his men with the same brilliant personal courage he had all along shown. Attacking the first American, who was armed with a pike, he parried a blow from it, and cut down the man; attacking another he was himself cut down, and only saved by the seaman Mindham, already mentioned, who slew his assailant. One of the American marines, using his clubbed musket, killed an Englishman, and so stubborn was the resistance of the little group that for a moment the assailants gave back, having lost several killed and wounded; but immediately afterward they closed in and slew their foes to the last man. The British fired a volley or two down the hatchway, in response to a couple of shots fired up; all resistance was at an end, and at 6.05, just fifteen minutes after the first gun had been fired, and not five after Captain Broke had come aboard, the colors of the *Chesapeake* were struck. Of her crew of 379 men, 61 were killed or mortally wounded, including her captain, her first and fourth lieutenants, the lieutenant of marines, the master (White), boatswain (Adams), and three midshipmen, and 85 severely and slightly

wounded, including both her other lieutenants, five midshipmen, and the chaplain, total, 148; the loss falling almost entirely upon the American portion of the crew.

Of the *Shannon's* men, 33 were killed outright or died of their wounds, including her first lieutenant, purser, captain's clerk, and one midshipman, and 50 wounded, including the captain himself and the boatswain; total, 83.

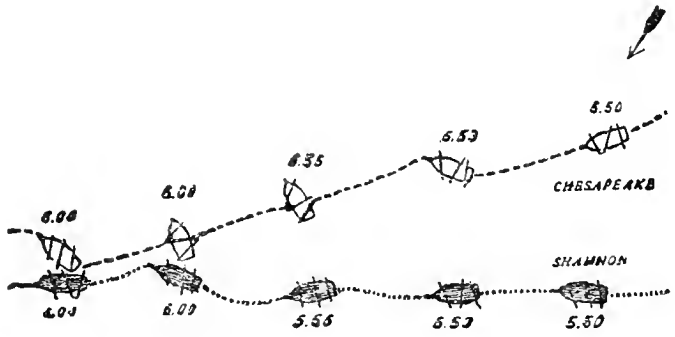
The *Chesapeake* was taken into Halifax, where Captain Lawrence and Lieutenant Ludlow were both buried with military honors. Captain Broke was made a baronet, very deservedly, and Lieutenants Wallis and Falkiner were both made commanders.

The British writers accuse some of the American crew of treachery; the Americans in turn, accuse the British of revolting brutality. Of course in such a fight things are not managed with urbane courtesy, and, moreover, writers are prejudiced. Those who would like to hear one side are referred to James; if they wish to hear the other, to the various letters from officers published in "Niles' Register," especially Vol. V, p. 142.

Neither ship had lost a spar, but all the lower masts, especially the two mizzen-masts, were badly wounded. The Americans at that period were fond of using bar shot, which were of very questionable benefit, being useless against a ship's hull, though said to be sometimes of great help in unrigging an antagonist from whom one was desirous

of escaping, as in the case of the *President* and *Endymion*.

It is thus seen that the *Shannon* received from shot alone only about half the damage the *Chesapeake* did; the latter was thoroughly beaten at the guns, in spite of what some American authors say to the contrary. And her victory was not in the




| "CHESAPEAKE" STRUCK BY | "SHANNON" STRUCK BY |
|---|---|
| 29 eighteen-pound shot, | 12 eighteen-pound shot, |
| 25 thirty-two-pound shot, | 13 thirty-two-pound shot, |
| 2 nine-pound shot, | 14 bar shot, |
| 306 grape, | 119 grape, |
| 362 shot. | 158 shot. |

slightest degree to be attributed to, though it may have been slightly hastened by, accident. Training and discipline won the victory, as often before; only in this instance the training and discipline were against us.

It is interesting to notice that the *Chesapeake* battered the *Shannon's* hull far more than either the *Java*, *Guerrière*, or *Macedonian* did the hulls of their opponents, and that she suffered less in re-

turn (not in *loss* but in *damage*) than they did. The *Chesapeake* was a better fighter than either the *Java, Guerrière,* or *Macedonian,* and could have captured any one of them. The *Shannon* of course did less damage than any of the American 44's, probably just about in the proportion of the difference in force.

Almost all American writers have treated the capture of the *Chesapeake* as if it was due simply to a succession of unfortunate accidents; for example, Cooper, with his usual cheerful optimism, says that the incidents of the battle, excepting its short duration, are "altogether the results of the chances of war," and that it was mainly decided by "fortuitous events as unconnected with any particular merit on the one side as they are with any particular demerit on the other."[29] Most naval men consider it a species of treason to regard the defeat as due to anything but extraordinary ill fortune. And yet no disinterested reader can help acknowledging that the true reason of the defeat was the very simple one that the *Shannon* fought better than the *Chesapeake.* It has often been said that up to the moment when the ships came together the loss and damage suffered by each were

[29] The worth of such an explanation is very aptly gauged in General Alexander S. Webb's "The Peninsula; McClellan's Campaign of 1862" (New York, 1881), p. 35, where he speaks of "those unforeseen or uncontrollable agencies which are vaguely described as the 'fortune of war,' but which usually prove to be the superior ability or resources of the antagonist."

about the same. This is not true, and even if it was, would not affect the question. The heavy loss on board the *Shannon* did not confuse or terrify the thoroughly trained men with their implicit reliance on their leaders; and the experienced officers were ready to defend any point that was menaced. An equal or greater amount of loss aboard the *Chesapeake* disheartened and confused the raw crew, who simply had not had the time or chance to become well disciplined. Many of the old hands, of course, kept their wits and their pluck, but the novices and the disaffected did not. Similarly with the officers; some, as the Court of Inquiry found, had not kept to their posts, and all being new to each other and the ship, could not show to their best. There is no doubt that the *Chesapeake* was beaten at the guns before she was boarded. Had the ships not come together, the fight would have been longer, the loss greater, and more nearly equal; but the result would have been the same. Cooper says that the enemy entered with great caution, and so slowly that twenty resolute men could have repulsed him. It was no proof of caution for Captain Broke and his few followers to leap on board, unsupported, and then they only waited for the main body to come up; and no twenty men could have repulsed such boarders as followed Broke. The fight was another lesson, with the parties reversed, to the effect that want of training and discipline is a bad handicap. Had the *Chesapeake's* crew been in service as many months as the *Shan-*

*non's* had been years, such a captain as Lawrence would have had his men perfectly in hand; they would not have been cowed by their losses, nor some of the officers too demoralized to act properly, and the material advantages which the *Chesapeake* possessed, although not very great, would probably have been enough to give her a good chance of victory. It is well worth noticing that the only thoroughly disciplined set of men aboard (all according to James himself, by the way, native Americans), namely, the marines, did excellently, as shown by the fact that three-fourths of their number were among the killed and wounded. The foreigners aboard the *Chesapeake* did not do as well as the Americans, but it is nonsense to ascribe the defeat in any way to them; it was only rendered rather more disastrous by their actions. Most of the English authors give very fair accounts of the battle, except that they hardly allude to the peculiar disadvantages under which the *Chesapeake* suffered when she entered into it. Thus, James thinks the *Java* was unprepared because she had only been to sea six weeks; but does not lay any weight on the fact that the *Chesapeake* had been out only as many hours.

Altogether the best criticism on the fight is that written by M. de la Gravière.[30] "It is impossible to avoid seeing in the capture of the *Chesapeake* a new proof of the enormous power of a good organization, when it has received the consecration

[30] "Guerres Maritimes," ii, 272.

of a few years' actual service on the sea. On this occasion, in effect, two captains equally renowned, the honor of two navies, were opposed to each other on two ships of the same tonnage and number of guns. Never had the chances seemed better balanced, but Sir Philip Broke had commanded the *Shannon* for nearly seven years, while Captain Lawrence had only commanded the *Chesapeake* for a few days. The first of these frigates had cruised for eighteen months on the coast of America; the second was leaving port. One had a crew long accustomed to the habits of strict obedience; the other was manned by men who had just been engaged in mutiny. The Americans were wrong to accuse fortune on this occasion. Fortune was not fickle, she was merely logical. The *Shannon* captured the *Chesapeake* on the first of June, 1813, but on the 14th of September, 1806, the day when he took command of his frigate, Captain Broke had begun to prepare the glorious termination to this bloody affair."

Hard as it is to breathe a word against such a man as Lawrence, a very Bayard of the seas, who was admired as much for his dauntless bravery as he was loved for his gentleness and uprightness, it must be confessed that he acted rashly. And after he had sailed, it was, as Lord Howard Douglas has pointed out, a tactical error, however chivalric, to neglect the chance of luffing across the *Shannon's* stern to rake her; exactly as it was a tactical error of his equally chivalrous antagonist to have let him

have such an opportunity. Hull would not have committed either error, and would, for the matter of that, have been an overmatch for either commander. But it must always be remembered that Lawrence's encounters with the English had not been such as to give him a high opinion of them. The only foe he had fought had been inferior in strength, it is true, but had hardly made any effective resistance. Another sloop, of equal, if not superior force, had tamely submitted to blockade for several days, and had absolutely refused to fight. And there can be no doubt that the *Chesapeake,* unprepared though she was, would have been an overmatch for the *Guerrière, Macedonian,* or *Java.* Altogether it is hard to blame Lawrence for going out, and in every other respect his actions never have been, nor will be, mentioned, by either friend or foe, without the warmest respect. But that is no reason for insisting that he was ruined purely by an adverse fate. We will do far better to recollect that as much can be learned from reverses as from victories. Instead of flattering ourselves by saying the defeat was due to chance, let us try to find out what the real cause was, and then take care that it does not have an opportunity to act again. A little less rashness would have saved Lawrence's life and his frigate, while a little more audacity on one occasion would have made Commodore Chauncy famous for ever. And whether a lesson is to be learned or not, a historian should remember that his profession is not that of a

panegyrist. The facts of the case unquestionably are that Captain Broke, in fair fight, within sight of the enemy's harbor, proved conqueror over a nominally equal and in reality slightly superior force; and that this is the only single-ship action of the war in which the victor was weaker in force than his opponent. So much can be gathered by reading only the American accounts. Moreover accident had little or nothing to do with the gaining of the victory. The explanation is perfectly easy: Lawrence and Broke were probably exactly equal in almost everything that goes to make up a first-class commander, but one had trained his crew for seven years, and the other was new to the ship, to the officers, and to the men, and the last to each other. The *Chesapeake's* crew must have been of fine material, or they would not have fought so well as they did.

So much for the American accounts. On the other hand, the capture of the *Chesapeake* was, and is, held by many British historians to "conclusively prove" a good many different things; such as, that if the odds were anything like equal, a British frigate could always whip an American, that in a hand-to-hand conflict such would invariably be the case, etc.; and as this was the only single-ship action of the war in which the victor was the inferior in force, most British writers insist that it reflected more honor on them than all the frigate actions of 1812 put together did on the Americans.

These assertions can be best appreciated by ref-

erence to a victory won by the French in the year of the Battle of the Nile. On the 14th of December, 1798, after two hours' conflict, the French 24-gun corvette *Bayonnaise* captured, by boarding, the English 32-gun frigate *Ambuscade*. According to James the *Ambuscade* threw at a broadside 262 pounds of shot, and was manned by 190 men, while the *Bayonnaise* threw 150 pounds, and had on board supernumeraries and passenger soldiers enough to make in all 250 men. According to the French historian Rouvier[31] the broadside force was 246 pounds against 80 pounds; according to Troude[32] it was 270 pounds against 112. M. Léon Guérin, in his voluminous but exceedingly prejudiced and one-sided work,[33] makes the difference even greater. At any rate the English vessel was vastly the superior in force, and was captured by boarding, after a long and bloody conflict in which she lost 46, and her antagonist over 50, men. During all the wars waged with the Republic and the Empire, no English vessel captured a French one as much superior to itself as the *Ambuscade* was to the *Bayonnaise*, precisely as in the war of 1812 no American vessel captured a British opponent as much superior to itself as the *Chesapeake* was to the *Shannon*. Yet no sensible man can help acknowl-

[31] "Histoire des Marins Français sous la République," par Charles Rouvier, Lieutenant de Vaisseau, Paris, 1868.

[32] "Batailles Navales."

[33] "Histoire Maritime de France" (par Léon Guérin, Historien titulaire de la Marine, Membre de la Legion d' Honneur), vi, 142 (Paris, 1852).

edging, in spite of these and a few other isolated instances, that at that time the French were inferior to the English, and the latter to the Americans.

It is amusing to compare the French histories of the English with the English histories of the Americans, and to notice the similarity of the arguments they use to detract from their opponents' fame. Of course I do not allude to such writers as Lord Howard Douglas or Admiral de la Gravière, but to men like William James and Léon Guérin, or even O. Troude. James is always recounting how American ships ran away from British ones, and Guérin tells as many anecdotes of British ships that fled from French foes. James reproaches the Americans for adopting a "Parthian" mode of warfare, instead of "bringing to in a bold and becoming manner." Precisely the same reproaches are used by the French writers, who assert that the English would not fight "fairly," but acquired an advantage by manœuvring. James lays great stress on the American long guns; so does Lieutenant Rouvier on the British carronades. James always tells how the Americans avoided the British ships, when the crews of the latter demanded to be led aboard; Troude says the British always kept at long shot, while the French sailors "demandérent à grands cris, l'abordage." James says the Americans "hesitated to grapple" with their foes "unless they possessed a twofold superiority;" Guérin that the English "never dared attack" except when they possessed "une supériorité énorme." The British

sneer at the "mighty dollar"; the French at the "eternal guinea." The former consider Decatur's name as "sunk" to the level of Porter's or Bainbridge's; the latter assert that the "presumptuous Nelson" was inferior to any of the French admirals of the time preceding the Republic. Says James: "The Americans only fight well when they have the superiority of force on their side;" and Lieutenant Rouvier: "Never have the English vanquished us with an undoubted inferiority of force."

On June 12, 1813, the small cutter *Surveyor*, of six 12-pound carronades, was lying in York River, in the Chesapeake, under the command of Mr. William S. Travis; her crew consisted of but 15 men.[34] At nightfall she was attacked by the boats of the *Narcissus* frigate, containing about 50 men, under the command of Lieutenant John Creerie.[35] None of the carronades could be used; but Mr. Travis made every preparation that he could for defence. The Americans waited till the British were within pistol shot before they opened their fire; the latter dashed gallantly on, however, and at once carried the cutter. But though brief, the struggle was bloody; 5 of the Americans were wounded, and of the British 3 were killed and 7 wounded. Lieutenant Creerie considered his opponents to have shown so much bravery that he returned Mr. Travis

[34] Letter of W. S. Travis, June 16, 1813.

[35] James, vi. 334.

his sword, with a letter as complimentary to him as it was creditable to the writer.[36]

As has been already mentioned, the Americans possessed a large force of gunboats at the beginning of the war. Some of these were fairly seaworthy vessels, of 90 tons burden, sloop or schooner-rigged, and armed with one or two long, heavy guns, and sometimes with several light carronades to repel boarders.[37] Gunboats of this kind, together with the few small cutters owned by the government, were serviceable enough. They were employed all along the shores of Georgia and the Carolinas, and in Long Island Sound, in protecting the coasting trade by convoying parties of small ves-

[36] The letter, dated June 13th, is as follows: "Your gallant and desperate attempt to defend your vessel against more than double your number, on the night of the 12th instant, excited such admiration on the part of your opponents as I have seldom witnessed, and induced me to return you the sword you had so nobly used, in testimony of mine. Our poor fellows have suffered severely, occasioned chiefly, if not solely, by the precautions you had taken to prevent surprise. In short, I am at a loss which to admire most, the previous arrangement aboard the *Surveyor*, or the determined manner in which her deck was disputed inch by inch. I am, sir," etc.

[37] According to a letter from Captain Hugh G. Campbell (in the Naval Archives, "Captains' Letters," 1812, vol. ii, Nos. 21 and 192), the crews were distributed as follows: ten men and a boy to a long 32, seven men and a boy to a long 9, and five men and a boy to a carronade, exclusive of petty officers. Captain Campbell complains of the scarcity of men, and rather naïvely remarks that he is glad the marines have been withdrawn from the gunboats, as this may make the commanders of the latter keep a brighter lookout than formerly.

sels from one port to another, and preventing them from being molested by the boats of any of the British frigates. They also acted as checks upon the latter in their descents upon the towns and plantations, occasionally capturing their boats and tenders, and forcing them to be very cautious in their operations. They were very useful in keeping privateers off the coast, and capturing them when they came too far in. The exploits of those on the southern coast will be mentioned as they occurred. Those in Long Island Sound never came into collision with the foe, except for a couple of slight skirmishes at very long range; but in convoying little fleets of coasters, and keeping at bay the man-of-war boats sent to molest them, they were invaluable; and they also kept the Sound clear of hostile privateers.

Many of the gunboats were much smaller than those just mentioned, trusting mainly to their sweeps for motive power, and each relying for offence on one long pivot gun, a 12 or 18-pounder. In the Chesapeake there was quite a large number of these small galleys, with a few of the larger kind, and here it was thought that by acting together in flotillas the gunboats might in fine weather do considerable damage to the enemy's fleet by destroying detached vessels, instead of confining themselves to the more humble tasks in which their brethren elsewhere were fairly successful. At this period Denmark, having lost all her large ships of war, was confining herself purely to gun-brigs. These were

stout little craft, with heavy guns, which, acting together, and being handled with spirit and skill, had on several occasions in calm weather captured small British sloops, and had twice so injured frigates as to make their return to Great Britain necessary; while they themselves had frequently been the object of successful cutting-out expeditions. Congress hoped that our gunboats would do as well as the Danish; but for a variety of reasons they failed utterly in every serious attack that they made on a man-of-war, and were worse than useless for all but the various subordinate employments above mentioned. The main reason for this failure was in the gunboats themselves. They were utterly useless except in perfectly calm weather, for in any wind the heavy guns caused them to careen over so as to make it difficult to keep them right side up, and impossible to fire. Even in smooth water they could not be fought at anchor, requiring to be kept in position by means of sweeps; and they were very unstable, the recoil of the guns causing them to roll so as to make it difficult to aim with any accuracy after the first discharge, while a single shot hitting one put it *hors de combat*. This last event rarely happened, however, for they were not often handled with any approach to temerity, and, on the contrary, usually made their attacks at a range that rendered it as impossible to inflict as to receive harm. It does not seem as if they were very well managed; but they were such ill-conditioned craft that the best officers might be pardoned for feeling

uncomfortable in them. Their operations throughout the war offer a painfully ludicrous commentary on Jefferson's remarkable project of having our navy composed exclusively of such craft.

The first aggressive attempt made with the gunboats was characteristically futile. On June 20th 15 of them, under Captain Tarbell, attacked the *Junon*, 38, Captain Sanders, then lying becalmed in Hampton Roads, with the *Barossa*, 36, and *Laurestinus*, 24, near her. The gunboats, while still at very long range, anchored, and promptly drifted round so that they couldn't shoot. Then they got under way, and began gradually to draw nearer to the *Junon*. Her defence was very feeble; after some hasty and ill-directed volleys she endeavored to beat out of the way. But meanwhile, a slight breeze having sprung up, the *Barossa*, Captain Sherriff, approached near enough to take a hand in the affair, and at once made it evident that she was a more dangerous foe than the *Junon*, though a lighter ship. As soon as they felt the effects of the breeze the gunboats became almost useless, and, the *Barossa's* fire being animated and well aimed, they withdrew. They had suffered nothing from the *Junon*, but during the short period she was engaged, the *Barossa* had crippled one boat and slightly damaged another; one man was killed and two wounded. The *Barossa* escaped unscathed and the *Junon* was but slightly injured. Of the combatants, the *Barossa* was the only one that came off with credit, the *Junon* behaving, if anything,

rather worse than the gunboats. There was no longer any doubt as to the amount of reliance to be placed on the latter.[38]

On June 20, 1813, a British force of three 74's, one 64, four frigates, two sloops, and three transports was anchored off Craney Island. On the northwest side of this island was a battery of 18-pounders, to take charge of which Captain Cassin, commanding the naval forces at Norfolk, sent ashore one hundred sailors of the *Constellation,* under the command of Lieutenants Neale, Shubrick, and Saunders, and fifty marines under Lieutenant Breckenridge.[39] On the morning of the 22d they were attacked by a division of 15 boats, containing 700 men,[40] seamen, marines, chasseurs, and soldiers of the 102d regiment, the whole under the command of Captain Pechell, of the *San Domingo,* 74. Captain Hanchett led the attack in the

[38] Though the flotilla men did nothing in the boats, they acted with the most stubborn bravery at the battle of Bladensburg. The British Lieutenant Gleig, himself a spectator, thus writes of their deeds on that occasion ("Campaign at Washington," p. 119): "Of the sailors, however, it would be injustice not to speak in the terms which their conduct merits. They were employed as gunners, and not only did they serve their guns with a quickness and precision which astonished their assailants, but they stood till some of them were actually bayoneted with fuses in their hands; nor was it till their leader was wounded and taken, and they saw themselves deserted on all sides by the soldiers, that they quitted the field." Certainly such men could not be accused of lack of courage. Something else is needed to account for the failure of the gunboat system.

[39] Letter of Captain John Cassin, June 23, 1813.

[40] James, vi, 337.

*Diadem's* launch. The battery's guns were not fired till the British were close in, when they opened with destructive effect. While still some seventy yards from the guns the *Diadem's* launch grounded, and the attack was checked. Three of the boats were now sunk by shot, but the water was so shallow that they remained above water; and while the fighting was still at its height, some of the *Constellation's* crew, headed by Midshipman Tatnall, waded out and took possession of them.[41] A few of their crew threw away their arms and came ashore with their captors; others escaped to the remaining boats, and immediately afterward the flotilla made off in disorder, having lost 91 men. The three captured barges were large, strong boats, one called the *Centipede* being fifty feet long, and more formidable than many of the American gunvessels. The *Constellation's* men deserve great credit for their defence, but the British certainly did not attack with their usual obstinacy. When the foremost boats were sunk, the water was so shallow and the bottom so good that the Americans on shore, as just stated, at once waded out to them; and if in the heat of the fight Tatnall and his seamen could get *out* to the boats, the 700 British ought to have been able to get *in* to the battery, whose 150 defenders would then have stood no chance.[42]

[41] "Life of Commodore Josiah Tatnall," by Charles C. Jones, Jr. (Savannah, 1878), p. 17.

[42] James comments on this repulse as "a defeat as discreditable to those that caused it as honorable to those that suf-

On July 14, 1813, the two small vessels *Scorpion* and *Asp,* the latter commanded by Mr. Sigourney, got under way from out of the Yeocomico Creek,[43] and at 10 A.M., discovered in chase the British brig-sloops *Contest,* Captain James Rattray, and *Mohawk,* Captain Henry D. Byng.[44] The *Scorpion* beat up the Chesapeake, but the dull-sailing *Asp* had to re-enter the creek; the two brigs anchored off the bar and hoisted out their boats, under the command of Lieutenant Rodger C. Curry; whereupon the *Asp* cut her cable and ran up the creek some distance. Here she was attacked by three boats, which Mr. Sigourney and his crew of twenty men, with two light guns, beat off; but they were joined by two others, and the five carried the *Asp,* giving no quarter. Mr. Sigourney and 10 of his men were killed or wounded, while the British also suffered heavily, having 4 killed and 7 (including

fered in it." "Unlike most other nations, the Americans in particular, the British, when engaged in expeditions of this nature, always rest their hopes of success upon valor rather than on numbers." These comments read particularly well when it is remembered that the assailants outnumbered the assailed in the proportion of 5 to 1. It is monotonous work to have to supplement a history by a running commentary on James' mistakes and inventions; but it is worth while to prove once for all the utter unreliability of the author who is accepted in Great Britain as the great authority about the war. Still, James is no worse than his compeers. In the American Coggeshall's "History of Privateers," the misstatements are as gross and the sneers in as poor taste—the British, instead of the Americans, being the objects.

[43] Letter of Midshipman McClintock, July 15, 1813.

[44] James, vi, 343.

Lieutenant Curry) wounded. The surviving Americans reached the shore, rallied under Midshipman H. McClintock (second in command), and when the British retired after setting the *Asp* on fire, at once boarded her, put out the flames, and got her in fighting order; but they were not again molested.

On July 29th, while the *Junon*, 38, Captain Sanders, and *Martin*, 18, Captain Senhouse, were in Delaware Bay, the latter grounded on the outside of Crow's Shoal; the frigate anchored within supporting distance, and while in this position the two ships were attacked by the American flotilla in those waters, consisting of eight gunboats, carrying each 25 men and one long 32, and two heavier block-sloops,[45] commanded by Lieutenant Samuel Angus. The flotilla kept at such a distance that an hour's cannonading did no damage whatever to anybody; and during that time gunboat No. 121, Sailing-master Shead, drifted a mile and a half away from her consorts. Seeing this the British made a dash at her in 7 boats, containing 140 men, led by Lieutenant Philip Westphal. Mr. Shead anchored and made an obstinate defence, but at the first discharge the gun's pintle gave way, and the next time it was fired the gun-carriage was almost torn to pieces. He kept up a spirited fire of small arms, in reply to the boat-carronades and musketry of the assailants; but the latter advanced steadily and carried the gunboat by boarding, 7

[45] Letter of Lieutenant Angus, July 30, 1813.

of her people being wounded, while 7 of the British were killed and 13 wounded.[46] The defence of No. 121 was very creditable, but otherwise the honor of the day was certainly with the British; whether because the gunboats were themselves so worthless or because they were not handled boldly enough, they did no damage, even to the grounded sloop, that would seem to have been at their mercy.[47]

On June 18th the American brig-sloop *Argus,* commanded by Lieutenant William Henry Allen, late first of the *United States,* sailed from New York for France, with Mr. Crawford, minister for that country, aboard, and reached L'Orient on July 11th, having made one prize on the way. On July 14th she again sailed, and cruised in the chops of the Channel, capturing and burning ship after ship, and creating the greatest consternation among the London merchants; she then cruised along Cornwall and got into St. George's Channel, where the work of destruction went on. The labor was very severe and harassing, the men being able to get very little rest.[48] On the night of August 13th,

[46] Letter of Mr. Shead, Aug. 5, 1813.

[47] The explanation possibly lies in the fact that the gunboats had worthless powder. In the Naval Archives there is a letter from Mr. Angus ("Masters-Commandant's Letters," 1813, No. 3; see also No. 91), in which he says that the frigate's shot passed over them, while theirs could not even reach the sloop. He also incloses a copy of a paper, signed by the other gunboat officers, which runs: "We, the officers of the vessels comprising the Delaware flotilla, protest against the powder as being unfit for service."

[48] Court of Inquiry into loss of *Argus,* 1815.

a brig laden with wine from Oporto was captured and burnt, and unluckily many of the crew succeeded in getting at some of the cargo. At 5 A.M. on the 14th a large brig-of-war was discovered standing down under a cloud of canvas.[49] This was the British brig-sloop *Pelican,* Captain John Fordyce Maples, which, from information received at Cork three days previous, had been cruising especially after the *Argus,* and had at last found her; St. David's Head bore east five leagues (lat. 52° 15° N. and 5° 50′ W.).

The small, fine-lined American cruiser, with her lofty masts and long spars, could easily have escaped from her heavier antagonist; but Captain Allen had no such intention, and, finding he could not get the weather-gage, he shortened sail and ran easily along on the starboard tack, while the *Pelican* came down on him with the wind (which was from the south) nearly aft. At 6 A.M. the *Argus* wore and fired her port guns within grape distance, the *Pelican* responded with her starboard battery, and the action began with great spirit on both sides.[50] At 6.04 a round shot carried off Captain Allen's leg, inflicting a mortal wound, but he stayed on deck till he fainted from loss of blood. Soon the British fire carried away the main-braces, main-spring-stay, gaff, and try-sail mast of the *Argus;* the first lieutenant, Mr. Watson, was wounded in

[49] Letter of Lieutenant Watson, March 2, 1815.

[50] Letter of Captain Maples to Admiral Thornborough, Aug. 14, 1813.

the head by a grape-shot and carried below; the second lieutenant, Mr. U. H. Allen (no relation of the captain), continued to fight the ship with great skill. The *Pelican's* fire continued very heavy, the *Argus* losing her spritsail-yard and most of the standing rigging on the port side of the foremast. At 6.14 Captain Maples bore up to pass astern of his antagonist, but Lieutenant Allen luffed into the wind and threw the main-topsail aback, getting into a beautiful raking position;[51] had the men at the guns done their duty as well as those on the quarter-deck did theirs, the issue of the fight would have been very different; but, as it was, in spite of her favorable position, the raking broadside of the *Argus* did little damage. Two or three minutes afterward the *Argus* lost the use of her after-sails through having her preventer-main-braces and top-sail tie shot away, and fell off before the wind, when the *Pelican* at 6.18 passed her stern, raking her heavily, and then ranged up on her starboard quarter. In a few minutes the wheel-ropes and running-rigging of every description were shot away, and the *Argus* became utterly unmanageable. The *Pelican* continued raking her with perfect impunity, and at 6.35 passed her broadside and took a position on her starboard bow, when at 6.45 the brigs fell together, and the British "were in the act of boarding when the *Argus* struck her colors,"[52] at 6.45 A.M. The *Pelican*

[51] Letter of Lieutenant Watson.

[52] Letter of Captain Maples.

carried, besides her regular armament, two long 6's as stern-chasers, and her broadside weight of metal was thus:[53]

1 x 6
1 x 6
1 x 12
8 x 32

or 280 lbs. against the *Argus*':

1 x 12
9 x 24

or, subtracting as usual 7 per cent for light weight of metal, 210 lbs. The *Pelican's* crew consisted of but 116 men, according to the British account, though the American reports make it much larger. The *Argus* had started from New York with 137 men, but having manned and sent in several prizes, her crew amounted, as near as can be ascertained, to 104. Mr. Low in his "Naval History," published just after the event, makes it but 99. James makes it 121; as he placed the crew of the *Enterprise* at 125, when it was really 102; that of the *Hornet* at 162, instead of 135; of the *Peacock* at 185, instead of 166; of the *Nautilus* at 106 instead of 95, etc., it is safe to presume that he has over-estimated it by at least 20, which brings the number pretty near to the American accounts. The *Pelican* lost but two men killed and five wounded. Captain Maples had a narrow escape, a spent grape-shot striking him in the chest with some force, and then falling on the deck. One shot had passed through the boatswain's and one through

[53] James, vi. 320.

the carpenter's cabin; her sides were filled with grape-shot, and her rigging and sails much injured; her foremast, main-topmast, and royal masts were slightly wounded, and two of her carronades dismounted.

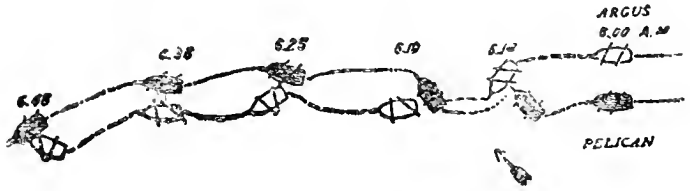
The injuries of the *Argus* have already been detailed; her hull and lower masts were also tolerably well cut up. Of her crew, Captain Allen, two midshipmen, the carpenter, and six seamen were killed or mortally wounded; her first lieutenant and 13 seamen severely and slightly wounded; total, 10 killed and 14 wounded.

In reckoning the comparative force, I include the Englishman's six-pound stern-chaser, which could not be fired in broadside with the rest of the guns, because I include the *Argus*' 12-pound bow-chaser, which also could not be fired in broadside, as it was crowded into the bridle-port. James of course, carefully includes the latter, though leaving out the former.

COMPARISON

| | Tons. | No. Guns. | Weight Metal. | Men. | Loss. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Argus* | 298 | 10 | 210 | 104 | 24 |
| *Pelican* | 467 | 11 | 280 | 116 | 7 |

| | Comparative Force. | Comparative Loss Inflicted. |
|---|---|---|
| *Argus* | .82 | .29 |
| *Pelican* | 1.00 | 1.00 |



Of all the single-ship actions fought in the war this is the least creditable to the Americans. The odds in force, it is true, were against the *Argus*, about in the proportion of 10 to 8, but this is neither enough to account for the loss inflicted, being as 10 to 3, nor for her surrendering when she had been so little ill used. It was not even as if her antagonist had been an unusually fine vessel of her class. The *Pelican* did not do so well as either the *Frolic* previously, or the *Reindeer* afterward, though perhaps rather better than the *Avon*, *Penguin*, or *Peacock*. With a comparatively unmanageable antagonist, in smooth water, she ought to have sunk her in three quarters of an hour. But the *Pelican's* not having done particularly well merely makes the conduct of the Americans look worse; it is just the reverse of the *Chesapeake's* case, where, paying the highest credit to the British, we still thought the fight no discredit to us. Here we can indulge no such reflection. The officers did well, but the crew did not. Cooper says: "The enemy was so much heavier that it may be doubted whether the *Argus* would have captured her antagonist under any ordinary circumstances." This I doubt; such a crew as the *Wasp's* or *Hornet's* probably would have been successful. The trouble with the guns of the *Argus* was not so much that they were too small, as that they did not hit; and this seems all the more incomprehensible when it is remembered that Captain Allen is the very man to whom Commodore Decatur, in his official letter, attributed the skilful gun-prac-

tice of the crew of the frigate *United States*. Cooper says that the powder was bad; and it has also been said that the men of the *Argus* were over-fatigued and were drunk, in which case they ought not to have been brought into action. Besides unskilfulness, there is another very serious count against the crew. Had the *Pelican* been some distance from the *Argus*, and in a position where she could pour in her fire with perfect impunity to herself, when the surrender took place, it would have been more justifiable. But, on the contrary, the vessels were touching, and the British boarded just as the colors were hauled down; it was certainly very disgraceful that the Americans did not rally to repel them, for they had still four fifths of their number absolutely untouched. They certainly *ought* to have succeeded, for boarding is a difficult and dangerous experiment; and if they had repulsed their antagonists they might in turn have carried the *Pelican*. So that, in summing up the merits of this action, it is fair to say that both sides showed skilful seamanship and unskilful gunnery; that the British fought bravely and that the Americans did not.

It is somewhat interesting to compare this fight, where a weaker American sloop was taken by a stronger British one, with two or three others, where both the comparative force and the result were reversed. Comparing it, therefore, with the actions between the *Hornet* and *Peacock* (British), the *Wasp* and *Avon*, and the *Peacock* (American) and *Epervier*, we get four actions, in one of which, the

first-named, the British were victorious, and in the other three the Americans.

| | Comparative Force. | Comparative Loss Inflicted. | Per cent. Loss. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Pelican* (British) | 1.00 | 2.00 | .06 |
| *Argus* (American) | .82 | .29 | .23 |
| *Hornet* (American) | 1.00 | 1.00 | .02 |
| *Peacock* (British) | .83 | .07 | .81 |
| *Wasp* (American) | 1.00 | 1.00 | .03 |
| *Avon* (British) | .80 | .07 | .33 |
| *Peacock* (American) | 1.00 | 1.00 | .01 |
| *Epervier* (British) | .81 | .08 | .20 |

It is thus seen that in these sloop actions the superiority of the force on the side of the victor was each time about the same. The *Argus* made a much more effectual resistance than did either the *Peacock*, *Avon*, or *Epervier*, while the *Pelican* did her work in poorer form than either of the victorious American sloops; and, on the other hand, the resistance of the *Argus* did not by any means show as much bravery as was shown in the defence of the *Peacock* or *Avon*, although rather more than in the case of the *Epervier*.

This is the only action of the war where it is almost impossible to find out the cause of the inferiority of the beaten crew. In almost all other cases we find that one crew had been carefully drilled, and so proved superior to a less-trained antagonist; but it is incredible that the man, to whose exertions when first lieutenant of the *States* Commodore Decatur ascribes the skilfulness of that ship's men, should have neglected to train his own crew; and this had the reputation of being composed of a fine

set of men. Bad powder would not account for the surrender of the *Argus* when so little damaged. It really seems as if the men *must* have been drunk or over-fatigued, as has been so often asserted. Of course drunkenness would account for the defeat, although not in the least altering its humiliating character.

"Et tu quoque" is not much of an argument; still it may be as well to call to mind here two engagements in which British sloops suffered much more discreditable defeats than the *Argus* did. The figures are taken from James; as given by the French historians they make even a worse showing for the British.

A short time before our war the British brig *Carnation*, 18, had been captured, by boarding, by the French brig *Palinure*, 16, and the British brig *Alacrity*, 18, had been captured, also by boarding, by the corvette *Abeille*, 20.

The following was the comparative force, etc., of the combatants:

| | Weight Metal | No. Crew | Loss |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Carnation* | 262 | 217 | 40 |
| *Palinure* | 174 | 100 | 20 |
| *Alacrity* | 262 | 100 | 18 |
| *Abeille* | 260 | 130 | 19 |

In spite of the pride the British take in their hand-to-hand prowess both of these ships were captured by boarding. The *Carnation* was captured by a much smaller force, instead of by a much larger one, as in the case of the *Argus;* and if the *Argus* gave up before she had suffered greatly, the *Alacrity* sur-

rendered when she had suffered still less. French historians asserted that the capture of the two brigs proved that "French valor could conquer British courage"; and a similar opinion was very complacently expressed by British historians after the defeat of the *Argus*. All that the three combats really "proved" was, that in eight encounters between British and American sloops the Americans were defeated once; and in a far greater number of encounters between French and British sloops the British were defeated twice. No one pretends that either navy was invincible; the question is, which side averaged best?

At the opening of the war we possessed several small brigs; these had originally been fast, handy little schooners, each armed with 12 long sixes, and with a crew of 60 men. As such they were effective enough; but when afterward changed into brigs, each armed with a couple of extra guns, and given 40 additional men, they became too slow to run, without becoming strong enough to fight. They carried far too many guns and men for their size, and not enough to give them a chance with any respectable opponent; and they were almost all ignominiously captured. The single exception was the brig *Enterprise*. She managed to escape capture, owing chiefly to good luck, and once fought a victorious engagement, thanks to the fact that the British possessed a class of vessels even worse than our own. She was kept near the land and finally took up her station off the eastern coast, where she

did good service in chasing away or capturing the various Nova Scotian or New Brunswick privateers, which were smaller and less formidable vessels than the privateers of the United States, and not calculated for fighting.

By crowding guns into her bridle-ports, and overmanning herself, the *Enterprise*, now under the command of Lieutenant William Burrows, mounted 14 eighteen-pound carronades and 2 long 9's, with 102 men. On September 5th, while standing along shore near Penguin Point, a few miles to the eastward of Portland, Me., she discovered, at anchor inside, a man-of-war brig[54] which proved to be H.M.S. *Boxer*, Captain Samuel Blyth, of 12 carronades, eighteen-pounders and two long sixes, with but 66 men aboard, 12 of her crew being absent.[55] The *Boxer* at once hoisted three British ensigns and bore up for the *Enterprise*, then standing in on the starboard tack; but when the two brigs were still 4 miles apart it fell calm. At midday a breeze sprang up from the southwest, giving the American the weather-gage, but the latter manœuvred for some time to windward to try the comparative rates of sailing of the vessels. At 3 P.M. Lieutenant Burrows hoisted three ensigns, shortened sail and edged away toward the enemy, who came gallantly on.

[54] Letter from Lieutenant Edward R. McCall to Commodore Hull, September 5, 1813.

[55] James, "Naval Occurrences," 264. The American accounts give the *Boxer* 104 men, on very insufficient grounds. Similarly, James gives the *Enterprise* 123 men. Each side will be considered authority for its own force and loss.

Captain Blyth had nailed his colors to the mast, telling his men they should never be struck while he had life in his body.[56] Both crews cheered loudly as they neared each other, and at 3.15, the two brigs being on the starboard tack not half pistol-shot apart, they opened fire, the American using the port, and the English the starboard, battery. Both broadsides were very destructive, each of the commanders falling at the very beginning of the action. Captain Blyth was struck by an eighteen-pound shot while he was standing on the quarter-deck; it passed completely through his body, shattering his left arm and killing him on the spot. The command, thereupon, devolved on Lieutenant David McCreery. At almost the same time his equally gallant antagonist fell. Lieutenant Burrows, while encouraging his men, laid hold of a gun-tackle fall to help the crew of a carronade run out the gun; in doing so he raised one leg against the bulwark, when a canister shot struck his thigh, glancing into his body and inflicting a fearful wound.[57] In spite of the pain he refused to be carried below, and lay on the deck, crying out that the colors must never be struck. Lieutenant Edward McCall now took command. At 3.30 the *Enterprise* ranged ahead, rounded to on the starboard tack, and raked the *Boxer* with the starboard guns. At 3.35 the *Boxer* lost her main-topmast and top sail yard, but her crew still kept up the fight bravely with the exception of four men who deserted

[56] "Naval Chronicle," xxxii, p. 462.

[57] Cooper, "Naval History," ii, p. 259.

their quarters and were afterward court-martialed for cowardice.[38] The *Enterprise* now set her foresail and took position on the enemy's starboard bow, delivering raking fires; and at 3.45 the latter surrendered, when entirely unmanageable and defenceless. Lieutenant Burrows would not go below until he had received the sword of his adversary, when he exclaimed, "I am satisfied. I die contented."

Both brigs had suffered severely, especially the *Boxer*, which had been hulled repeatedly, had three eighteen-pound shot through her foremast, her top-

gallant forecastle almost cut away, and several of her guns dismounted. Three men were killed and seventeen wounded, four mortally. The *Enterprise* had been hulled by one round and many grape; one 18-pound ball had gone through her foremast, and another through her main-mast, and she was much cut up aloft. Two of her men were killed and ten wounded, two of them (her commander and Midshipman Kervin Waters) mortally. The British court-martial attributed the defeat of the *Boxer* "to a superiority in the enemy's force, principally in the number of men, as well as to a greater degree

[38] Minutes of court-martial held aboard H.M.S. *Surprise*, January 8, 1814.

of skill in the direction of her fire, and to the destructive effects of the first broadside." But the main element was the superiority in force, the difference in loss being very nearly proportional to it; both sides fought with equal bravery and equal skill. This fact was appreciated by the victors, for at a naval dinner given in New York shortly afterward, one of the toasts offered was: "The crew of the *Boxer;* enemies by law, but by gallantry brothers." The two commanders were both buried at Portland, with all the honors of war. The conduct of Lieutenant Burrows needs no comment. He was an officer greatly beloved and respected in the service. Captain Blyth, on the other side, had not only shown himself on many occasions to be a man of distinguished personal courage, but was equally noted for his gentleness and humanity. He had been one of Captain Lawrence's pall-bearers, and but a month previous to his death had received a public note of thanks from an American colonel for an act of great kindness and courtesy.[39]

The *Enterprise,* under Lieut.-Com. Renshaw, now cruised off the southern coast, where she made several captures. One of them was a heavy British privateer, the *Mars,* of 14 long nines and 75 men, which struck after receiving a broadside that killed and wounded 4 of her crew. The *Enterprise* was chased by frigates on several occasions: being once forced to throw overboard all her guns but two, and escaping only by a shift in the wind. Afterward,

[39] "Naval Chronicle," xxxii, 466.

as she was unfit to cruise, she was made a guardship at Charlestown; for the same reason the *Boxer* was not purchased into the service.

On October 4th some volunteers from the Newport flotilla captured, by boarding, the British privateer *Dart*,[60] after a short struggle, in which two of the assailants were wounded and several of the privateersmen, including the first officer, were killed.

On December 4th, Commodore Rodgers, still in command of the *President*, sailed again from Providence, Rhode Island. On the 25th, in lat. 19° N. and long. 35° W., the *President*, during the night, fell in with two frigates, and came so close that the headmost fired at her, when she made off. These were thought to be British, but were in reality the two French 40-gun frigates *Nymphe* and *Meduse*, one month out of Brest. After this little encounter Rodgers headed toward the Barbadoes, and cruised to windward of them.

On the whole the ocean warfare of 1813 was decidedly in favor of the British, except during the first few months. The *Hornet's* fight with the *Peacock* was an action similar to those that took place in 1812, and the cruise of Porter was unique in our annals, both for the audacity with which it was planned, and the success with which it was executed. Even later in the year the *Argus* and the *President* made bold cruises in sight of the British coasts, the former working great havoc among the merchantmen. But by that time the tide had

[60] Letter of Mr. Joseph Nicholson, Oct. 5, 1813.

turned strongly in favor of our enemies. From the beginning of summer the blockade was kept up so strictly that it was with difficulty any of our vessels broke through it; they were either chased back or captured. In the three actions that occurred, the British showed themselves markedly superior in two, and in the third the combatants fought equally well, the result being fairly decided by the fuller crew and slightly heavier metal of the *Enterprise*. The gunboats, to which many had looked for harbor defence, proved nearly useless, and were beaten off with ease whenever they made an attack.

The lessons taught by all this were the usual ones. Lawrence's victory in the *Hornet* showed the superiority of a properly trained crew to one that had not been properly trained; and his defeat in the *Chesapeake* pointed exactly the same way, demonstrating in addition the folly of taking a raw levy out of port, and, before they have had the slightest chance of getting seasoned, pitting them against skilled veterans. The victory of the *Enterprise* showed the wisdom of having the odds in men and metal in our favor, when our antagonist was otherwise our equal; it proved, what hardly needed proving, that, whenever possible, a ship should be so constructed as to be superior in force to the foes it would be likely to meet. As far as the capture of the *Argus* showed anything, it was the advantage of heavy metal and the absolute need that a crew should fight with pluck. The failure of the gunboats *ought* to have taught the lesson (though it did not) that too great economy in

providing the means of defence may prove very expensive in the end, and that good officers and men are powerless when embarked in worthless vessels. A similar point was emphasized by the strictness of the blockade, and the great inconvenience it caused; namely, that we ought to have had ships powerful enough to break it.

We had certainly lost ground during this year; fortunately we regained it during the next two.

BRITISH VESSELS SUNK OR TAKEN

| Name | Guns | Tonnage |
|---|---|---|
| *Peacock* | 20 | 477 |
| *Boxer* | 14 | 181 |
| *Highflyer* | 6 | 96 |
| | 40 | 754 |

AMERICAN VESSELS SUNK OR TAKEN

| Name. | Guns. | Tonnage. |
|---|---|---|
| *Chesapeake* | 50 | 1,265 |
| *Argus* | 20 | 298 |
| *Viper* | 10 | 148 |
| | 80 | 1,711 |

VESSELS BUILT OR PURCHASED

| Name. | Rig. | Guns. | Tonnage. | Where Built. | Cost. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Rattlesnake* | Brig | 14 | 278 | Medford, Pa. | $18,000 |
| *Alligator* | Sch'r | 4 | 80 | | |
| *Asp* | Sloop | 3 | 56 | | 2,600 |

PRIZES MADE.

| Name of Ship. | No. of Prizes. |
|---|---|
| *President* | 13 |
| *Congress* | 4 |
| *Chesapeake* | 6 |
| *Essex* | 14 |
| *Hornet* | 3 |
| *Argus* | 21 |
| *Small craft* | 18 |
| | 79 |

# CHAPTER VI

## 1813

### ON THE LAKES

ONTARIO—Comparison of the rival squadrons—Chauncy takes York and Fort George—Yeo is repulsed at Sackett's Harbor, but keeps command of the lake—Chauncy sails—Yeo's partial victory off Niagara—Indecisive action off the Genesee—Chauncy's partial victory off Burlington, which gives him the command of the lake—ERIE—Perry's success in creating a fleet—His victory—CHAMPLAIN—Loss of the *Growler* and *Eagle*—Summary

### ONTARIO

WINTER had almost completely stopped preparations on the American side. Bad weather put an end to all communication with Albany or New York, and so prevented the transit of stores, implements, etc. It was worse still with the men, for the cold and exposure so thinned them out that the new arrivals could at first barely keep the ranks filled. It was moreover, exceedingly difficult to get seamen to come from the coast to serve on the lakes, where work was hard, sickness prevailed, and there was no chance of prize-money. The British government had the great advantage of being able to move its sailors where it pleased, while in the American service at that period the men enlisted for particular ships, and the only way to get

them for the lakes at all was by inducing portions of crews to volunteer to follow their officers thither.[1] However, the work went on in spite of interruptions. Fresh gangs of shipwrights arrived, and, largely owing to the energy and capacity of the head builder, Mr. Henry Eckford (who did as much as any naval officer in giving us an effective force on Ontario) the *Madison* was equipped, a small despatch sloop, *The Lady of the Lake*, prepared, and a large new ship, the *General Pike*, 28, begun, to mount 13 guns in each broadside and 2 on pivots.

Meanwhile Sir George Prevost, the British commander in Canada, had ordered two 24-gun ships to be built and they were begun; but he committed the mistake of having one laid down in Kingston and the other in York, at the opposite end of the lake. Earle, the Canadian commodore, having proved himself so incompetent, was removed; and in the beginning of May Captain Sir James Lucas Yeo arrived, to act as commander-in-chief of the naval forces, together with four captains, eight lieutenants, twenty-four midshipmen, and about 450 picked sea-

[1] Cooper, ii, 357. One of James' most comical misstatements is that on the lakes the American sailors were all "picked men." On p. 367, for example, in speaking of the battle of Lake Erie he says: "Commodore Perry had picked crews to all his vessels." As a matter of fact Perry had once sent in his resignation solely on account of the very poor quality of his crews, and had with difficulty been induced to withdraw it. Perry's crews were of hardly average excellence, but then the average American sailor was a very good specimen.

men, sent out by the home government especially for service on the Canada lakes.[2]

The comparative force of the two fleets or squadrons it is hard to estimate. I have already spoken of the difficulty in finding out what guns were mounted on any given ship at a particular time, and it is even more perplexing with the crews. A schooner would make one cruise with but thirty hands; on the next it would appear with fifty, a number of militia having volunteered as marines. Finding the militia rather a nuisance, they would be sent ashore, and on her third cruise the schooner would substitute half a dozen frontier seamen in their place. It was the same with the larger vessels. The *Madison* might at one time have her full complement of 200 men: a month's sickness would ensue, and she would sail with but 150 effectives. The *Pike's* crew of 300 men at one time would shortly afterward be less by a third in consequence of a draft of sailors being sent to the upper lakes. So it is almost impossible to be perfectly accurate; but, making a comparison of the various authorities from Lieutenant Emmons to James, the following tables of the forces may be given as very nearly correct. In broadside force I count every pivot gun, and half of those that were not on pivots.

CHAUNCY'S SQUADRON

| Name | Rig | Tonnage | Crew | Broadside Metal, lbs. | Armament |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Pike* | ship | 875 | 300 | 360 | 28 long 24's |
| *Madison* | " | 593 | 200 | 364 | 24 short 32's |
| *Oneida* | brig | 243 | 100 | 172 | 16 " 24's |

[2] James, vi. 353.

| Name. | Rig. | Tonnnage. | Crew. | Broadside Metal; lbs. | Armament. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hamilton,* | schooner | 112 | 50 | 80 | 1 long 32<br>1 " 24<br>8 " 6's |
| *Scourge,* | " | 110 | 50 | 80 | 1 " 32<br>8 short 12's |
| *Conquest,* | " | 82 | 40 | 56 | 1 long 32<br>1 " 12<br>4 " 6's |
| *Tompkins,* | " | 96 | 40 | 62 | 1 " 32<br>1 " 12<br>6 " 6's |
| *Julia,* | " | 82 | 35 | 44 | 1 " 32<br>1 " 12 |
| *Growler,* | " | 81 | 33 | 44 | 1 " 32<br>1 " 12 |
| *Ontario,* | " | 53 | 35 | 44 | 1 " 32<br>1 " 12 |
| *Fair American,* | " | 53 | 30 | 36 | 1 " 24<br>1 " 12 |
| *Pert,* | " | 50 | 25 | 24 | 1 " 24 |
| *Asp,* | " | 57 | 25 | 24 | 1 " 24 |
| *Lady of the Lake,* | " | 89 | 15 | 9 | 1 " 9 |
| 14 | | 2,576 | 980 | 1,399 | 112 |

This is not materially different from James' account (p. 356), which gives Chauncy 114 guns, 1,193 men, and 2,121 tons. *The Lady of the Lake,* however, was never intended for anything but a despatch boat, and the *Scourge* and *Hamilton* were both lost before Chauncy actually came into collision with Yeo. Deducting these, in order to compare the two foes, Chauncy had left 11 vessels of 2,265 tons, with 865 men and 92 guns throwing a broadside of 1,230 pounds.

YEO'S SQUADRON.

| Name. | Rig. | Tonnage. | Crew. | Broadside Metal; lbs. | Armament. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Wolfe,* | ship | 637 | 220 | 392 | 1 long 24<br>8 " 18's<br>4 short 68's<br>10 " 32's |
| *Royal George,* | " | 510 | 200 | [illegible] | 3 long 18's<br>2 short 68's<br>16 " 32's |

| Name. | Rig. | Tonnage. | Crew. | Broadside Metal; lbs. | Armament. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Melville*, | brig | 279 | 100 | 210 | 2 long 18's<br>12 short 32's |
| *Moira*, | " | 262 | 100 | 153 | 2 long 9's<br>12 short 24's |
| *Sydney Smith*, | schooner | 216 | 80 | 172 | 2 long 12's<br>10 short 32's |
| *Beresford*, | " | 187 | 70 | 87 | 1 long 24<br>1 " 9<br>6 short 18's |
| | | 2,091 | 770 | 1,374 | 92 |

This differs but slightly from James, who gives Yeo 92 guns throwing a broadside of 1,374 pounds, but only 717 men. As the evidence in the court-martial held on Captain Barclay, and the official accounts (on both sides) of Macdonough's victory, convict him of very much underrating the force in men of the British on Erie and Champlain, it can be safely assumed that he has underestimated the force in men on Lake Ontario. By comparing the tonnage he gives to Barclay's and Downie's squadrons with what it really was, we can correct his account of Yeo's tonnage.

The above figures would apparently make the two squadrons about equal, Chauncy having 95 men more, and throwing at a broadside 144 pounds shot less than his antagonist. But the figures do not by any means show all the truth. The Americans greatly excelled in the number and calibre of their long guns. Compared thus, they threw at one discharge 694 pounds of long-gun metal and 536 pounds of carronade metal; while the British only threw from their long guns 180 pounds, and from their carronades 1,194. This unequal distribution of metal was very much in favor of the

Americans. Nor was this all. The *Pike*, with her 15 long 24's in battery, was an overmatch for any one of the enemy's vessels, and bore the same relation to them that the *Confiance*, at a later date, did to Macdonough's squadron. She should certainly have been a match for the *Wolfe* and *Melville* together, and the *Madison* and *Oneida* for the *Royal George* and *Sydney Smith*. In fact, the three heavy American vessels ought to have been an overmatch for the four heaviest of the British squadron, although these possessed the nominal superiority. And in ordinary cases the eight remaining American gun-vessels would certainly seem to be an overmatch for the two British schooners, but it is just here that the difficulty of comparing the forces comes in. When the water was very smooth and the wind light, the long 32's and 24's of the Americans could play havoc with the British schooners, at a distance which would render the carronades of the latter useless. But the latter were built for war, possessed quarters and were good cruisers, while Chauncy's schooners were merchant vessels, without quarters, crank, and so loaded down with heavy metal that whenever it blew at all hard they could with difficulty be kept from upsetting, and ceased to be capable even of defending themselves. When Sir James Yeo captured two of them he would not let them cruise with his other vessels at all, but sent them back to act as gunboats, in which capacity they were serving when recaptured; this is a tolerable test of their value compared to their opponents.

Another disadvantage that Chauncy had to contend with, was the difference in the speed of the various vessels. The *Pike* and *Madison* were fast, weatherly ships; but the *Oneida* was a perfect slug, even going free and could hardly be persuaded to beat to windward at all. In this respect Yeo was much better off; his six ships were regular men-of-war with quarters, all of them seaworthy, and fast enough to be able to act with uniformity, and not needing to pay much regard to the weather. His force could act as a unit; but Chauncy's could not. Enough wind to make a good working breeze for his larger vessels put all his smaller ones *hors de combat;* and in weather that suited the latter, the former could not move about at all. When speed became necessary the two ships left the brig hopelessly behind, and either had to do without her, or else perhaps let the critical moment slip by while waiting for her to come up. Some of the schooners sailed quite as slowly; and finally it was found out that the only way to get all the vessels into action at once was to have one half the fleet tow the other half. It was certainly difficult to keep the command of the lake when, if it came on to blow, the commodore had to put into port under penalty of seeing a quarter of his fleet founder before his eyes. These conflicting considerations render it hard to pass judgment; but on the whole it would seem as if Chauncy was the superior in force, for even if his schooners were not counted, his three square-rigged vessels were at least a match for

the four square-rigged British vessels, and the two British schooners would not have counted very much in such a conflict. In calm weather he was certainly the superior. This only solves one of the points in which the official letters of the two commanders differ: after every meeting each one insists that he was inferior in force, that the weather suited his antagonist, and that the latter ran away, and got the worst of it; all of which will be considered further on.

In order to settle toward which side the balance of success inclined, we must remember that there were two things the combatants were trying to do, viz.:

(1) To damage the enemy directly by capturing or destroying his vessels. This was the only object we had in view in sending out ocean cruisers, but on the lakes it was subordinated to:

(2) Getting the control of the lake, by which invaluable assistance could be rendered to the army. The most thorough way of accomplishing this of course was by destroying the enemy's squadron; but it could also be done by building ships too powerful for him to face or by beating him in some engagement which, although not destroying his fleet, would force him to go into port. If one side was stronger, then the weaker party by skilful manœuvring might baffle the foe, and rest satisfied by keeping the sovereignty of the lake disputed; for, as long as one squadron was not undisputed master it could not be of much assistance in transporting

troops, attacking forts, or otherwise helping the military.

In 1813 the Americans gained the first point by being the first to begin operations. They were building a new ship, afterward the *Pike,* at Sackett's Harbor; the British were building two new ships, each about two-thirds the force of the *Pike,* one at Toronto (then called *York*), one at Kingston. Before these were built the two fleets were just on a par; the destruction of the *Pike* would give the British the supremacy; the destruction of either of the British ships, provided the *Pike* were saved, would give the Americans the supremacy. Both sides had already committed faults. The Americans had left Sackett's Harbor so poorly defended and garrisoned that it invited attack, while the British had fortified Kingston very strongly, but had done little for York, and, moreover, ought not to have divided their forces by building ships in different places.

Commodore Chauncy's squadron was ready for service on April 19th, and on the 25th he made sail with the *Madison,* Lieutenant-commander Elliott, floating his own broad pennant, *Oneida,* Lieutenant McPherson, *Scourge,* Mr. Osgood, *Tompkins,* Lieutenant Brown, *Conquest,* Lieutenant Pettigrew, *Growler,* Mr. Mix, *Julia,* Mr. Trant, *Asp,* Lieutenant Smith, *Pert,* Lieutenant Adams, *American,* Lieutenant Chauncy, *Ontario,* Mr. Stevens, *Lady of the Lake,* Mr. Hinn, and *Raven,* transport, having on board General Dearborn and 1,700 troops, to at-

tack York, which was garrisoned by about 700 British regulars and Canadian militia under Major-General Sheafe. The new 24-gun ship was almost completed, and the *Gloucester* 10-gun brig was in port; the guns of both vessels were used in defence of the port. The fleet arrived before York early on April 27th, and the debarkation began at about 8 A.M. The schooners beat up to the fort under a heavy cannonade, and opened a spirited fire from their long guns; while the troops went ashore under the command of Brigadier-General Pike. The boats were blown to leeward by the strong east wind, and were exposed to a galling fire, but landed the troops under cover of the grape thrown by the vessels. The schooners now beat up to within a quarter of a mile from the principal work, and opened heavily upon it, while at the same time General Pike and the main body of the troops on shore moved forward to the assault, using their bayonets only. The British regulars and Canadian militia, outnumbered three to one (including the American sailors) and with no very good defensive works, of course had to give way, having lost heavily, especially from the fire of the vessels. An explosion immediately afterward killed or wounded 250 of the victors, including General Pike. The Americans lost, on board the fleet, 4 killed, including midshipmen Hatfield and Thompson, and 8 wounded;[3] and of the army,[4] 14 killed and 32

[3] Letter of Commodore Chauncy, April 28, 1813.

[4] James, "Military Occurrences" (London, 1818) i, p. 151.

wounded by the enemy's fire, and 52 killed and 180 wounded by the explosion: total loss, 288. The British regulars lost 130 killed and wounded, including 40 by the explosion;[5] together with 50 Canadians and Indians, making a total of 180, besides 290 prisoners. The 24-gun ship was burned, her guns taken away, and the *Gloucester* sailed back to Sackett's Harbor with the fleet. Many military and naval stores were destroyed, and much more shipped to the Harbor. The great fault that the British had committed was in letting the defences of so important a place remain so poor, and the force in it so small. It was impossible to resist very long when Pike's troops were landed, and the fleet in position. On the other hand, the Americans did the work in good style; the schooners were finely handled, firing with great precision and completely covering the troops, who, in turn, were disembarked and brought into action very handsomely.

After being detained in York a week by bad weather the squadron got out, and for the next fortnight was employed in conveying troops and stores to General Dearborn. Then it was determined to make an attack on Fort George, where the British General Vincent was stationed with from 1,000[6] to 1,800[7] regulars, 600 militia, and about 100 Indians. The American troops numbered about 4,500, practically under the command of Colonel Scott. On

[5] Lossing's "Field-Book of the War of 1812," p. 581. The accounts vary somewhat.

[6] James, "Military Occurrences," i. p. 151.

[7] Lossing, 596.

May 26th Commodore Chauncy carefully reconnoitred the place to be attacked, and in the night made soundings along the coast, and laid buoys so as to direct the small vessels, who were to do the fighting. At 3 A.M. on the 27th the signal was made to weigh, the heavy land artillery being on the *Madison,* and the other troops on the *Oneida,* the *Lady of the Lake,* and in batteaux, many of which had been captured at York. The *Julia*, *Growler,* and *Ontario* moved in and attacked a battery near the lighthouse, opening a cross-fire which silenced it. The troops were to be disembarked further along the lake, near a battery of one long 24, managed by Canadian militia. The *Conquest* and *Tompkins* swept in under fire to this battery, and in 10 minutes killed or drove off the artillerymen, who left the gun spiked, and then opened on the British. "The American ships with their heavy discharges of round and grape too well succeeded in thinning the British ranks."[8] Meanwhile the troop-boats, under Captain Perry and Colonel Scott dashed in, completely covered by a heavy fire of grape directed point-blank at the foe by the *Hamilton*, *Scourge,* and *Asp.* "The fire from the American shipping committed dreadful havoc among the British, and rendered their efforts to oppose the landing of the enemy ineffectual."[9] Colonel Scott's troops, thus protected, made good their landing and met the British regulars; but the latter were so terribly cut up by the tremendous discharges of grape and canister from

[8] James, "Military Occurrences," i, p. 151. [9] *Loc. cit.*

the schooners, that in spite of their gallantry and discipline they were obliged to retreat, blowing up and abandoning the fort. One sailor was killed and two wounded;[10] seventeen soldiers were killed and forty-five wounded;[11] making the total American loss sixty-five. Of the British regulars 52 were killed, 44 wounded and 262 "wounded and missing,"[12] in addition to about forty Canadians and Indians *hors de combat* and nearly 500 militia captured; so that in this very brilliant affair the assailants suffered hardly more than a fifth of the loss in killed and wounded that the assailed did; which must be attributed to the care with which Chauncy had reconnoitred the ground and prepared the attack, the excellent handling of the schooners, and the exceedingly destructive nature of their fire. The British batteries were very weak, and, moreover, badly served. Their regular troops fought excellently, it was impossible for them to stand against the fire of the schooners, which should have been engaged by the batteries on shore; and they were too weak in numbers to permit the American army to land and then attack it when away from the boats. The Americans were greatly superior in force, and yet deserve very much credit for achieving their object so quickly, with such slight loss to themselves, and at such a heavy cost to the foe. The effect of the victory was most important, the

[10] Letter of Commodore Chauncy, May 29, 1813.
[11] Letter of General Dearborn, May 27, 1813.
[12] Letter of Brig.-Gen. Vincent, May 28, 1813.

British evacuating the whole Niagara frontier, and leaving the river in complete possession of the Americans for the time being. This offered the opportunity for despatching Captain Perry up above the falls to take out one captured brig (the *Caledonia*) and four purchased schooners, which had been lying in the river unable to get past the British batteries into Lake Erie. These five vessels were now carried into that lake, being tracked up against the current by oxen, to become a most important addition to the American force upon it.

While Chauncy's squadron was thus absent at the west end of the lake the *Wolfe*, 24, was launched and equipped at Kingston, making the British force on the lake superior to that of the Americans. Immediately Sir George Prevost and Sir James Lucas Yeo, the commanders-in-chief of the land and water forces in the Canadas, decided to strike a blow at Sackett's Harbor and destroy the *General Pike*, 28, thus securing to themselves the superiority for the rest of the season. Accordingly, they embarked on May 27th, in the *Wolfe*, *Royal George*, *Moira*, *Prince Regent*, *Simcoe*, and *Seneca*, with a large number of gunboats, barges, and batteaux; and on the next day saw and attacked a brigade of 19 boats transporting troops to Sackett's Harbor, under command of Lieutenant Aspinwall. Twelve boats were driven ashore, and 70 of the men in them captured; but Lieutenant Aspinwall and 100 men succeeded in reaching the Harbor, bringing up the total number of regulars there to 500 men,

General Brown having been summoned to take the chief command. About 400 militia also came in, but were of no earthly service. There were, however, 200 Albany volunteers, under Colonel Mills, who could be relied on. The defences were miserably inadequate, consisting of a battery of one long gun, and a block-house.

On the 29th Sir George Prevost and 800 regulars landed, being covered by the gunboats under Sir James Lucas Yeo. The American militia fled at once, but the regulars and volunteers held their ground in and around the block-house. "At this point the further energies of the [British] troops became unavailing. The [American] block-house and stockade could not be carried by assault nor reduced by field-pieces, had we been provided with them; the fire of the gunboats proved insufficient to attain that end; light and adverse winds continued, and our larger vessels were still far off."[13] The British re-embarked precipitately. The American loss amounted to 23 killed and 114 wounded; that of the British 52 killed and 211 wounded,[14] most of the latter being taken prisoners. During the fight some of the frightened Americans set fire to the storehouses, the *Pike* and *Gloucester;* the former were consumed, but the flames were extinguished before they did any damage to either of the vessels. This attack differed especially from those on Fort George and York, in that the attacking force was

[13] Letter of Adj.-Gen. Baynes, May 30, 1813.

[14] James, "Military Occurrences," p. 173.

relatively much weaker; still it ought to have been successful. But Sir George could not compare as a leader with Col. Scott or Gen. Pike; and Sir James did not handle the gunboats by any means as well as the Americans did their schooners in similar attacks. The admirers of Sir James lay the blame on Sir George, and *vice versa;* but in reality neither seems to have done particularly well. At any rate the affair was the reverse of creditable to the British.

The British squadron returned to Kingston, and Chauncy, having heard that they were out, came down the lake and went into port about June 2d. So far the Americans had had all the success, and had controlled the lake; but now Yeo's force was too formidable to be encountered until the *Pike* was built, and the supremacy passed undisputed into his hands, while Chauncy lay in Sackett's Harbor. Of course with the *Pike* soon to be built, Yeo's uncontested superiority could be of but short duration; but he used his time most actively. He sailed from Kingston on the 3d of June, to co-operate with the British army at the head of the lake, and intercept all supplies going to the Americans. On the 8th he discovered a small camp of the latter near Forty Mile Creek, and attacked it with the *Beresford, Sydney Smith,* and gunboats, obliging the Americans to leave their camp, while their equipages, provisions, stores, and batteaux fell into the hands of the British, whose troops occupied the post, thus assisting in the series of engagements which ended in the humiliating repulse of General Wilkinson's ex-

pedition into Canada. On the 13th two schooners and some boats bringing supplies to the Americans were captured, and on the 16th a depôt of provisions at the Genesee River shared the same fate. On the 19th a party of British soldiers were landed by the fleet at Great Sodas, and took off 600 barrels of flour. Yeo then returned to Kingston, where he anchored on the 27th, having done good service in assisting the land forces.[15] As a small compensation, on the 18th of the same month the *Lady of the Lake*, Lieut. Wolcott Chauncy, captured off Presqu' Isle the British schooner *Lady Murray*, containing 1 ensign, 15 soldiers, and 6 sailors, together with stores and ammunition.[16]

During the early part of July neither squadron put out in force; although on the first of the month Commodore Yeo made an abortive attempt to surprise Sackett's Harbor, but abandoned it when it was discovered. Meanwhile the Americans were building a new schooner, the *Sylph*, and the formidable corvette *Pike* was made ready to sail by July 21st. On the same day the entire American squadron, or fleet, sailed up to the head of the lake, and reached Niagara on the 27th. Here Col. Scott and some of his regulars were embarked, and on the 30th a descent was made upon York, where 11 transports were destroyed, 5 cannon, a quantity of flour, and some ammunition carried off, and the barracks

[15] Letter of Sir James Lucas Yeo to Mr. Croker, June 29, 1813.

[16] Letter of Lieut. Wolcott Chauncy to Com. Chauncy, June 18, 1813.

burned. On the 3d of August the troops were disembarked at the Niagara, and 111 officers and men were sent up to join Perry on Lake Erie. As this left the squadron much deranged 150 militia were subsequently lent it by General Boyd, but they proved of no assistance (beyond swelling the number of men Yeo captured in the *Growler* and *Julia* from 70 individuals to 80), and were again landed.

Commodore Yeo sailed with his squadron from Kingston on Aug. 2d, and on the 7th the two fleets for the first time came in sight of one another, the Americans at anchor off Fort Niagara, the British six miles to windward, in the W.N.W. Chauncy's squadron contained one corvette, one ship sloop, one brig sloop, and ten schooners, manned by about 965 men, and throwing at a broadside, 1,390 lbs. of shot, nearly 800 of which were from long guns. Yeo's included two ship sloops, two brig sloops, and two schooners, manned by 770 men, and throwing at a broadside 1,374 lbs., but 180 being from long guns. But Yeo's vessels were all built with bulwarks, while ten of Chauncy's had none; and, moreover, his vessels could all sail and manœuvre together, while, as already remarked, one half of the American fleet spent a large part of its time towing the other half. The *Pike* would at ordinary range be a match for the *Wolfe* and *Melville* together; yet in actual weight of metal she threw less than the former ship alone. In calm weather the long guns of the American schooners gave them a great advantage; in rough weather they could not be used at all. Still, on the

whole, it could fairly be said that Yeo was advancing to attack a superior fleet.

All through the day of the 7th the wind blew light and variable, and the two squadrons went through a series of manœuvres, nominally to bring on an action. As each side flatly contradicts the other it is hard to tell precisely what the manœuvres were; each captain says the other avoided him and that *he* made all sail in chase. At any rate it was just the weather for Chauncy to engage in.

That night the wind came out squally; and about 1 A.M. on the morning of the 8th a heavy gust struck the *Hamilton* and *Scourge*, forcing them to careen over till the heavy guns broke loose, and they foundered, but 16 men escaping,—which accident did not open a particularly cheerful prospect to the remainder of the schooners. Chauncy's force was, by this accident, reduced to a numerical equality with Yeo's, having perhaps a hundred more men,[17] and throwing 144 lbs. less shot at a broadside. All through the two succeeding days the same manœuvring went on; the question as to which avoided the fight is simply one of veracity between the two commanders.

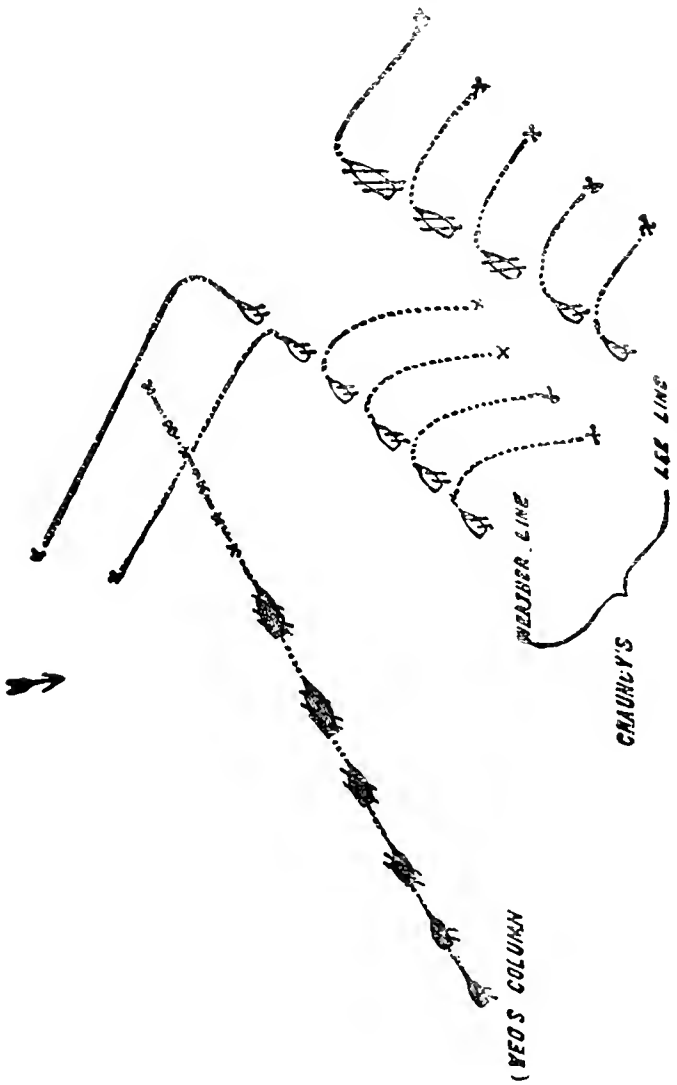
[17] This estimate as to men is a mere balancing of probabilities. If James underestimates the British force on Ontario as much as he has on Erie and Champlain, Yeo had as many men as his opponent. Chauncy, in one of his letters (preserved with the other manuscript letters in the Naval Archives), says: "I enclose the muster-rolls of all my ships," but I have not been able to find them, and in any event the complements were continually changing completely. The point is not important, as each side certainly had plenty of men on this occasion.

and of course each side, to the end of time, will believe its own leader. But it is not of the least consequence, as neither accomplished anything.

On the 10th the same tedious evolutions were continued, but at 7 P.M. the two squadrons were tolerably near one another, Yeo to windward, the breeze being fresh from the S.W. Commodore Chauncy formed his force in two lines on the port tack, while Commodore Yeo approached from behind and to windward, in single column, on the same tack. Commodore Chauncy's weather line was formed of the *Julia*, *Growler*, *Pert*, *Ash*, *Ontario*, and *American*, in that order, and the lee line of the *Pike*, *Oneida*, *Madison*, *Tompkins*, and *Conquest*. Chauncy formed his weather line of the smaller vessels, directing them, when the British should engage, to edge away and form to leeward of the second line, expecting that Sir James would follow them down. At 11 the weather line opened fire at very long range; at 11.15 it was returned, and the action became general and harmless; at 11.30 the weather line bore up and passed to leeward, except the *Julia* and *Growler*, which tacked. The British ships kept their luff and cut off the two that had tacked, while Commodore Chauncy's lee line "edged away two points, to lead the enemy down, not only to engage him to more advantage, but to lead him from the *Julia* and *Growler*." [18] Of course the enemy did not come down, and the *Julia* and *Growler* were not saved. Yeo kept on till he

[18] Letter of Commodore Isaac Chauncy, Aug. 13, 1813.

had cut off the two schooners, fired an ineffectual broadside at the other ships, and tacked after the *Growler* and *Julia*. Then, when too late, Chauncy




The ships are shown just before the weather line bore up; the dotted lines show the courses the vessels kept, and the crosses indicate their positions shortly after the *Julia* and *Growler* had tacked, and after Chauncy's lee line had "kept off two points."

tacked also, and stood after him. The schooners, meanwhile, kept clawing to windward till they were overtaken, and, after making a fruitless effort to run

the gantlet through the enemy's squadron by putting before the wind, were captured. Yeo's account is simple: "Came within gunshot of *Pike* and *Madison*, when they immediately bore up, fired their stern chase guns, and made all sail for Niagara, leaving two of their schooners astern, which we captured." [19] The British had acted faultlessly, and the honor and profit gained by the encounter rested entirely with them. On the contrary, neither Chauncy nor his subordinates showed to advantage.

Cooper says that the line of battle was "singularly well adapted to draw the enemy down," and "admirable for its advantages and ingenuity." In the first place it is an open question whether the enemy needed drawing down; on this occasion he advanced boldly enough. The formation may have been ingenious, but it was the reverse of advantageous. It would have been far better to have had the strongest vessels to windward, and the schooners, with their long guns, to leeward, where they would not be exposed to capture by any accident happening to them. Moreover, it does not speak well for the discipline of the fleet, that two commanders should have directly disobeyed orders. And when the two schooners did tack, and it was evident that Sir James would cut them off, it was an extraordinary proceeding for Chauncy to "edge away two points . . . to lead the enemy from the *Growler* and *Julia*." It is certainly a novel principle, that if part of a force is surrounded the true way to rescue

[19] Letter of Sir James Lucas Yeo, Aug. 10, 1813.

it is to run away with the balance, in hopes that the enemy will follow. Had Chauncy tacked at once, Sir James would have been placed between two fires, and it would have been impossible for him to capture the schooners. As it was, the British commander had attacked a superior force in weather that had just suited it, and yet had captured two of its vessels without suffering any injury beyond a few shot holes in the sails. The action, however, was in no way decisive. All next day, the 11th, the fleets were in sight of one another, the British to windward, but neither attempted to renew the engagement. The wind grew heavier, and the villanous little American schooners showed such strong tendencies to upset, that two had to run into Niagara Bay to anchor. With the rest Chauncy ran down the lake to Sackett's Harbor, which he reached on the 13th, provisioned his squadron for five weeks, and that same evening proceeded up the lake again.

The advantage in this action had been entirely with the British, but it is simply nonsense to say, as one British historian does, that "on Lake Ontario, therefore, we at last secured a decisive predominance, which we maintained until the end of the war."[20] This "decisive" battle left the Americans just as much in command of the lake as the British;

[20] "History of the British Navy," by Charles Duke Yonge (London, 1866), iii, p. 24. It is apparently not a work of any authority, but I quote it as showing probably the general feeling of British writers about the action and its results, which can only proceed from extreme partisanship and ignorance of the subject.

and even this very questionable "predominance" lasted but six weeks, after which the British squadron was blockaded in port most of the time. The action has a parallel in that fought on the 22d of July, 1805, by Sir Robert Calder's fleet of 15 sail of the line against the Franco-Spanish fleet of 20 sail of the line, under M. Villeneuve.[21] The two fleets engaged in a fog, and the English captured two ships, when both sides drew off, and remained in sight of each other the next day without either renewing the action. "A victory therefore it was that Sir Robert Calder had gained, but not a 'decisive' nor a 'brilliant' victory." [22] This is exactly the criticism that should be passed on Sir James Lucas Yeo's action of the 10th of August.

From the 13th of August to the 10th of September both fleets were on the lake most of the time, each commodore stoutly maintaining that he was chasing the other; and each expressing in his letters his surprise and disgust that his opponent should be afraid of meeting him "though so much superior in force." The facts are of course difficult to get at, but it seems pretty evident that Yeo was determined to engage in heavy, and Chauncy in light, weather;

[21] "Batailles Navales de la France," par O. Troude, iii. 352. It seems rather ridiculous to compare these lake actions, fought between small flotillas, with the gigantic contests which the huge fleets of Europe waged in contending for the supremacy of the ocean; but the difference is one of degree and not of kind, and they serve well enough for purposes of illustration or comparison.

[22] James' "Naval History," iv, 14.

and that the party to leeward generally made off. The Americans had been reinforced by the *Sylph*, schooner, of 300 tons and 70 men, carrying four long 32's on pivots, and six long 6's. Theoretically her armament would make her formidable; but practically her guns were so crowded as to be of little use, and the next year she was converted into a brig, mounting 24-pound carronades.

On the 11th of September a partial engagement, at very long range, in light weather, occurred near the mouth of the Genesee River; the Americans suffered no loss whatever, while the British had one midshipman and three seamen killed and seven wounded, and afterward ran into Amherst Bay. One of their brigs, the *Melville*, received a shot so far under water that to get at and plug it, the guns had to be run in on one side and out on the other. Chauncy describes it as a running fight of 3½ hours, the enemy then escaping into Amherst Bay.[23] James (p. 38) says that "at sunset a breeze sprang up from the westward, when Sir James steered for the American fleet; but the American commodore avoided a close action, and thus the affair ended." This is a good sample of James' trustworthiness; his account is supposed to be taken from Commodore Yeo's letter,[24] which says: "At sunset a breeze sprang up from the westward, when I steered for the False Duck Islands, under which the enemy could not keep the weather-gage, but be obliged to

[23] Letter to the Secretary of the Navy, Sept. 13, 1813.
[24] Letter to Admiral Warren, Sept. 12, 1813.

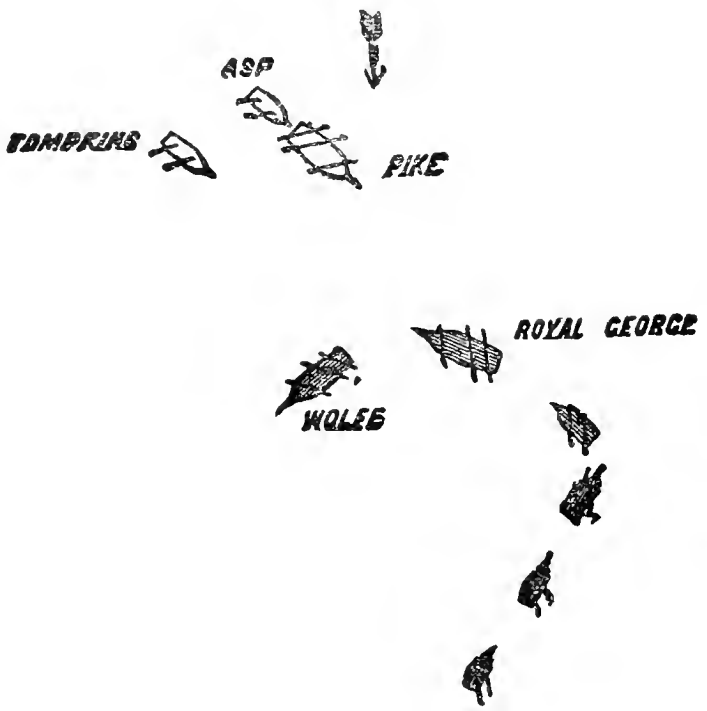
meet us on equal terms. This, however, he carefully avoided doing." In other words, Yeo did *not* steer *for* but *away from* Chauncy. Both sides admit that Yeo got the worst of it and ran away, and it is only a question as to whether Chauncy followed him or not. Of course in such light weather Chauncy's long guns gave him a great advantage. He had present 10 vessels; the *Pike, Madison, Oneida, Sylph, Tompkins, Conquest, Ontario, Pert, American,* and *Asp,* throwing 1,288 lbs. of shot, with a total of 98 guns. Yeo had 92 guns, throwing at a broadside 1,374 lbs. Nevertheless, Chauncy told but part of the truth in writing as he did: "I was much disappointed at Sir James refusing to fight me, as he was so much superior in point of force, both in guns and men, having upward of 20 guns more than we have, and heaves a greater weight of shot." His inferiority in long guns placed Yeo at a great disadvantage in such a very light wind; but in his letter he makes a marvelous admission of how little able he was to make good use of even what he had. He says: "I found it impossible to bring them to close action. We remained in this mortifying situation five hours, having only six guns in all the squadron that would reach the enemy (not a carronade being fired)." Now according to James himself ("Naval Occurrences," p. 297) he had in his squadron 2 long 24's, 13 long 18's, 2 long 12's, and 3 long 9's, and, in a fight of five hours, at very long range, in smooth water, it was a proof of culpable incompetency on his part that he did not think of doing what Elliott

and Perry did in similar circumstances on Lake Erie —substitute all his long guns for some of the carronades on the engaged side. Chauncy could place in broadside 7 long 32's, 18 long 24's, 4 long 12's, 8 long 6's; so he could oppose 37 long guns, throwing 752 lbs. of shot, to Yeo's 20 long guns, throwing 333 lbs. of shot. The odds were thus more than two to one against the British in any case; and their commander's lack of resource made them still greater. But it proved a mere skirmish, with no decisive results.

The two squadrons did not come in contact again till on the 28th, in York Bay. The Americans had the weather-gage, the wind being fresh from the east. Yeo tacked and stretched out into the lake, while Chauncy steered directly for his centre. When the squadrons were still a league apart the British formed on the port tack, with their heavy vessels ahead; the Americans got on the same tack and edged down toward them, the *Pike* ahead, towing the *Asp;* the *Tompkins*, under Lieut. Bolton Finch, next; the *Madison* next, being much retarded by having a schooner in tow; then the *Sylph*, with another schooner in tow, the *Oneida*, and the two other schooners. The British, fearing their sternmost vessels would be cut off, at 12.10 came round on the starboard tack, beginning with the *Wolfe*, Commodore Yeo, and *Royal George*, Captain William Howe Mulcaster, which composed the van of the line. They opened with their starboard guns as soon as they came round. When the *Pike* was

abeam of the *Wolfe,* which was past the centre of the British line, the Americans bore up in succession for their centre.

The *Madison* was far back, and so was the *Sylph,* neither having cast off their tows; so the whole brunt of the action fell on the *Pike, Asp,* and *Tompkins.* The latter kept up a most gallant and spirited




fire till her foremast was shot away. But already the *Pike* had shot away the *Wolfe's* maintopmast and main yard, and inflicted so heavy a loss upon her that Commodore Yeo, not very heroically, put dead before the wind, crowding all the canvas he could on her forward spars, and she ran completely past all her own vessels, who of course crowded sail

after her. The retreat of the commodore was most ably covered by the *Royal George*, under Captain Mulcaster, who was unquestionably the best British officer on the lake. He luffed up across the commodore's stern, and delivered broadsides in a manner that won the admiration even of his foes. The *Madison* and *Sylph*, having the schooners in tow, could not overtake the British ships, though the *Sylph* opened a distant fire; the *Pike* kept on after them, but did not cast off the *Asp*, and so did not gain; and at 3.15 the pursuit was relinquished;[25] when the enemy were running into the entirely undefended port of Burlington Bay, whence escape would have been impossible. The *Tompkins* had lost her foremast, and the *Pike* her foretopgallant mast, with her bowsprit and mainmast wounded; and of her crew five men were killed or wounded, almost all by the guns of the *Royal George*. These were the only injuries occasioned by the enemy's fire, but the *Pike's* starboard bow-chaser burst, killing or wounding 22 men, besides blowing up the topgallant forecastle, so that the bow pivot gun could not be used. Among the British ships, the *Wolfe* lost her maintopmast, mizzentopmast, and mainyard, and the *Royal George* her foretopmast; both suffered a heavy loss in killed and wounded, according to the report of the British officers captured in the transports a few days afterward.

As already mentioned, the British authorities no longer published accounts of their defeats, so Com-

[25] Letter of Commodore Chauncy, Sept. 28, 1813.

modore Yeo's report on the action was not made public. Brenton merely alludes to it as follows (Vol. II, p. 503): "The action of the 28th of September, 1813, in which Sir James Yeo in the *Wolfe* had his main and mizzentopmasts shot away, and was obliged to put before the wind, gave Mulcaster an opportunity of displaying a trait of valor and seamanship which elicited the admiration of friends and foes, when he gallantly placed himself between his disabled commodore and a superior enemy." James speaks in the vaguest terms. He first says, "Commodore Chauncy, having the weather-gage, kept his favorite distance," which he did because Commodore Yeo fled so fast that he could not be overtaken; then James mentions the injuries the *Wolfe* received, and says that "it was these and not, as Mr. Clark says, 'a manœuvre of the commodore's' that threw the British in confusion." In other words, it was the commodore's shot and not his manœuvring that threw the British into confusion—a very futile distinction. Next he says that "Commodore Chauncy would not venture within carronade range," whereas he *was* within carronade range of the *Wolfe* and *Royal George,* but the latter did not wait for the *Madison* and *Oneida* to get within range with *their* carronades. The rest of his article is taken up with exposing the absurdities of some of the American writings, miscalled histories, which appeared at the close of the war. His criticisms on these are very just, but afford a funny instance of the pot calling the kettle back. This much

is clear, that the British were beaten and forced to flee, when but part of the American force was engaged. But in good weather the American force was so superior that being beaten would have been no disgrace to Yeo, had it not been for the claims advanced both by himself and his friends, that on the whole he was victorious over Chauncy. The *Wolfe* made anything but an obstinate fight, leaving almost all the work to the gallant Mulcaster, in the *Royal George*, who shares with Lieutenant Finch of the *Tompkins* most of the glory of the day. The battle, if such it may be called, completely established Chauncy's supremacy, Yeo spending most of the remainder of the season blockaded in Kingston. So Chauncy gained a victory which established his control over the lakes; and, moreover, he gained it by fighting in succession, almost single-handed, the two heaviest ships of the enemy. But gaining the victory was only what should have been expected from a superior force. The question is, Did Chauncy use his force to the best advantage? And it can not be said that he did. When the enemy bore up it was a great mistake not to cast off the schooners which were being towed. They were small craft, not of much use in the fight, and they entirely prevented the *Madison* from taking any part in the contest, and kept the *Sylph* at a great distance; and by keeping the *Asp* in tow the *Pike*, which sailed faster than any of Yeo's ships, was distanced by them. Had she left the *Asp* behind and run in to engage the *Royal George* she could have mastered, or at

any rate disabled, her; and had the swift *Madison* cast off her tow she could also have taken an effective part in the engagement. If the *Pike* could put the British to flight almost single-handed, how much more could she not have done when assisted by the *Madison* and *Oneida?* The cardinal error, however, was made in discontinuing the chase. The British were in an almost open roadstead, from which they could not possibly escape. Commodore Chauncy was afraid that the wind would come up to blow a gale, and both fleets would be thrown ashore; and, moreover, he expected to be able to keep a watch over the enemy, and to attack him at a more suitable time. But he utterly failed in this last; and had the American squadron cast off their tows and gone boldly in,they certainly ought to have been able to destroy or capture the entire British force before a gale could blow up. Chauncy would have done well to keep in mind the old adage, so peculiarly applicable to naval affairs: "L'audace! toujours l'audace! et encore l'audace!" Whether the fault was his or that of his subordinates, it is certain that while the victory of the 28th of September definitely settled the supremacy of the lake in favor of the Americans, yet this victory was by no means so decided as it should have been, taking into account his superiority in force and advantage in position, and the somewhat spiritless conduct of his foe.

Next day a gale came on to blow, which lasted till the evening of the 31st. There was no longer any apprehension of molestation from the British,

so the troop transports were sent down the lake by themselves, while the squadron remained to watch Yeo. On Oct. 2d he was chased, but escaped by his better sailing; and next day false information induced Chauncy to think Yeo had eluded him and passed down the lake, and he accordingly made sail in the direction of his supposed flight. On the 5th, at 3 P.M., while near the False Ducks, seven vessels were made out ahead, which proved to be British gunboats, engaged in transporting troops. All sail was made after them; one was burned, another escaped, and five were captured, the *Mary*, *Drummond*, *Lady Gore*, *Confiance*, and *Hamilton*,[26]—the two latter being the rechristened *Julia* and *Growler*. Each gun-vessel had from one to three guns, and they had aboard in all 264 men, including seven naval (three royal and four provincial) and ten military officers. These prisoners stated that in the action of the 28th the *Wolfe* and *Royal George* had lost very heavily.

After this Yeo remained in Kingston, blockaded there by Chauncy for most of the time; on Nov. 10th he came out and was at once chased back into port by Chauncy, leaving the latter for the rest of the season entirely undisturbed. Accordingly, Chauncy was able to convert his small schooners into transports. On the 17th these transports were used to convey 1,100 men of the army of General Harrison from the mouth of the Genesee to Sackett's Harbor, while Chauncy blockaded Yeo in Kingston. The

[26] Letter of Commodore Chauncy, Oct. 8, 1813.

duty of transporting troops and stores went on till the 27th, when everything had been accomplished; and a day or two afterward navigation closed.

As between the Americans and British, the success of the season was greatly in favor of the former. They had uncontested control over the lake from April 19th to June 3d, and from Sept. 28th to Nov. 29th, in all 107 days; while their foes only held it from June 3d to July 21st, or for 48 days; and from that date to Sept. 28th, for 69 days, the two sides were contending for the mastery. York and Fort George had been taken, while the attack on Sackett's Harbor was repulsed. The Americans lost but two schooners, both of which were recaptured; while the British had one 24-gun ship nearly ready for launching destroyed, and one 10-gun brig taken, and the loss inflicted upon each other in transports, gunboats, storehouses, stores, etc., was greatly in favor of the former. Chauncy's fleet, moreover, was able to co-operate with the army for over twice the length of time Yeo's could (107 days to 48).

It is more difficult to decide between the respective merits of the two commanders. We had shown so much more energy than the Anglo-Canadians that at the beginning of the year we had overtaken them in the building race, and the two fleets were about equally formidable. The *Madison* and *Oneida* were not quite a match for the *Royal George* and *Sydney Smith* (opposing 12 32-pound and 8 24-pound carronades to 2 long 18's, 1 long 12, 1 68-pound and 13

32-pound carronades); and our ten-gun-schooners would hardly be considered very much of an overmatch for the *Melville*, *Moira*, and *Beresford*. Had Sir James Yeo been as bold and energetic as Barclay or Mulcaster he would certainly not have permitted the Americans, when the forces were so equal, to hold uncontested sway over the lake, and by reducing Fort George, to cause disaster to the British land forces. It would certainly have been better to risk a battle with equal forces than to wait till each fleet received an additional ship, which rendered Chauncy's squadron the superior by just about the superiority of the *Pike* to the *Wolfe*. Again, Yeo did not do particularly well in the repulse before Sackett's Harbor; in the skirmish off Genesee River he showed a marked lack of resource; and in the action of the 28th of September (popularly called the "Burlington Races" from the celerity of his retreat) he evinced an amount of caution that verged toward timidity, in allowing the entire brunt of the fighting to fall on Mulcaster in the *Royal George*, a weaker ship than the *Wolfe*. On the other hand, he gave able co-operation to the army while he possessed control of the lake: he made a most gallant and successful attack on a superior force on the 10th of August; and for six weeks subsequently by skilful manœuvring he prevented this same superior force from acquiring the uncontested mastery. It was no disgrace to be subsequently blockaded: but it is very ludicrous in his admirers to think that he came out first best.

Chauncy rendered able and invaluable assistance to the army all the while that he had control of the water; his attacks on York and Fort George were managed with consummate skill and success, and on the 28th of September he practically defeated the opposing force with his own ship alone. Nevertheless he can by no means be said to have done the best he could with the materials he had. His stronger fleet was kept two months in check by a weaker British fleet. When he first encountered the foe, on August 10th, he ought to have inflicted such a check upon him as would at least have confined him to port and given the Americans immediate superiority on the lake; instead of which he suffered a mortifying, although not at all disastrous, defeat, which allowed the British to contest the supremacy with him for six weeks longer. On the 28th of September, when he only gained a rather barren victory, it was nothing but excessive caution that prevented him from utterly destroying his foe. Had Perry on that day commanded the American fleet there would have been hardly a British ship left on Ontario. Chauncy was an average commander; and the balance of success inclined to the side of the Americans only because they showed greater energy and skill in shipbuilding, the crews and commanders on both sides being very nearly equal.

LAKE ERIE

Captain Oliver Hazard Perry had assumed command of Erie and the upper lakes, acting under Commodore Chauncy. With intense energy he at once began creating a naval force which should be able to contend successfully with the foe. As already said, the latter in the beginning had exclusive control of Lake Erie; but the Americans had captured the *Caledonia*, brig, and purchased three schooners, afterward named the *Somers*, *Tigress*, and *Ohio*, and a sloop, the *Trippe*. These at first were blockaded in the Niagara, but after the fall of Fort George and retreat of the British forces, Captain Perry was enabled to get them out, tracking them up against the current by the most arduous labor. They ran up to Presque Isle (now called Erie), where two 20-gun brigs were being constructed under the directions of the indefatigable captain. Three other schooners, the *Ariel*, *Scorpion*, and *Porcupine*, were also built.

The harbor of Erie was good and spacious, but had a bar on which there was less than seven feet of water. Hitherto this had prevented the enemy from getting in; now it prevented the two brigs from getting out. Captain Robert Heriot Barclay had been appointed commander of the British forces on Lake Erie; and he was having built at Amherstburg a 20-gun ship. Meanwhile he blockaded Perry's force, and as the brigs could not cross the bar with their guns in, or except in smooth water, they of course could not do so in his presence. He

kept a close blockade for some time; but on the 2d of August he disappeared. Perry at once hurried forward everything; and on the 4th, at 2 P.M., one brig, the *Lawrence,* was towed to that point of the bar where the water was deepest. Her guns were whipped out and landed on the beach, and the brig got over the bar by a hastily improvised "camel."

"Two large scows, prepared for the purpose, were hauled alongside, and the work of lifting the brig proceeded as fast as possible. Pieces of massive timber had been run through the forward and after ports, and when the scows were sunk to the water's edge, the ends of the timbers were blocked up, supported by these floating foundations. The plugs were now put in the scows, and the water was pumped out of them. By this process the brig was lifted quite two feet, though when she was got on the bar it was found that she still drew too much water. It became necessary, in consequence, to cover up everything, sink the scows anew, and block up the timbers afresh. This duty occupied the whole night." [27]

Just as the *Lawrence* had passed the bar, at 8 A.M. on the 5th, the enemy reappeared, but too late; Captain Barclay exchanged a few shots with the schooners and then drew off. The *Niagara* crossed without difficulty. There were still not enough men to man the vessels, but a draft arrived from Ontario, and many of the frontiersmen volunteered, while soldiers also were sent on board. The squad-

[27] Cooper, ii, 389. Perry's letter of Aug. 5th is very brief.

ron sailed on the 18th in pursuit of the enemy, whose ship was now ready. After cruising about some time the *Ohio* was sent down the lake, and the other ships went into Put-in-Bay. On the 9th of September Captain Barclay put out from Amherstburg, being so short of provisions that he felt compelled to risk an action with the superior force opposed. On the 10th of September his squadron was discovered from the masthead of the *Lawrence* in the northwest. Before going into details of the action we will examine the force of the two squadrons, as the accounts vary considerably.

The tonnage of the British ships, as already stated, we know exactly, they having been all carefully appraised and measured by the builder, Mr. Henry Eckford, and two sea-captains. We also know the dimensions of the American ships. The *Lawrence* and *Niagara* measured 480 tons apiece. The *Caledonia*, brig, was about the size of the *Hunter*, or 180 tons. The *Tigress*, *Somers*, and *Scorpion* were subsequently captured by the foe and were then said to measure, respectively, 96, 94, and 86 tons; in which case they were larger than similar boats on Lake Ontario. The *Ariel* was about the size of the *Hamilton;* the *Porcupine* and *Trippe* about the size of the *Asp* and *Pert*. As for the guns, Captain Barclay in his letter gives a complete account of those on board his squadron. He has also given a complete account of the American guns, which is most accurate, and, if anything, underestimates them. At least Emmons in his "History" gives the

*Trippe* a long 32, while Barclay says she had only a long 24; and Lossing in his "Field-Book" says (but I do not know on what authority) that the *Caledonia* had 3 long 24's, while Barclay gives her 2 long 24's and one 32-pound carronade; and that the *Somers* had two long 32's, while Barclay gives her one long 32 and one 24-pound carronade. I shall take Barclay's account, which corresponds with that of Emmons, the only difference being that Emmons puts a 24-pounder on the *Scorpion* and a 32 on the *Trippe,* while Barclay reverses this. I shall also follow Emmons in giving the *Scorpion* a 32-pound carronade instead of a 24.

It is more difficult to give the strength of the respective crews. James says the Americans had 580, all "picked men." They were just as much picked men as Barclay's were, and no more; that is, the ships had "scratch" crews. Lieutenant Emmons gives Perry 490 men; and Lossing says he "had upon his muster-roll 490 names." In Vol. XIV, p. 566, of the American State Papers, is a list of the prize-moneys owing to each man (or to the survivors of the killed), which gives a grand total of 532 men, including 136 on the *Lawrence* and 155 on the *Niagara,* 45 of whom were volunteers—frontiersmen. Deducting these we get 487 men, which is pretty near Lieutenant Emmons' 490. Possibly Lieutenant Emmons did not include these volunteers; and it may be that some of the men whose names were down on the prize list had been so sick that they were left on shore. Thus Lieutenant Yar-

nall testified before a Court of Inquiry in 1815, that there were but 131 men and boys of every description on board the *Lawrence* in the action; and the *Niagara* was said to have had but 140. Lieutenant Yarnall also said that "but 103 men on board the *Lawrence* were fit for duty"; as Captain Perry in his letter said that 31 were unfit for duty, this would make a total of 134. So I shall follow the prize-money list; at any rate the difference in number is so slight as to be immaterial. Of the 532 men whose names the list gives, 45 were volunteers, or landsmen, from among the surrounding inhabitants; 158 were marines or soldiers (I do not know which, as the list gives marines, soldiers, and privates, and it is impossible to tell which of the two former heads include the last); and 329 were officers, seamen, cooks, pursers, chaplains, and supernumeraries. Of the total number, there were on the day of action, according to Perry's report, 116 men unfit for duty, including 31 on board the *Lawrence*, 28 on board the *Niagara*, and 57 on the small vessels.

All the later American writers put the number of men in Barclay's fleet precisely at "502," but I have not been able to find out the original authority. James ("Naval Occurrences," p. 289) says the British had but 345, consisting of 50 seamen, 85 Canadians, and 210 soldiers. But the letter of Adjutant-General E. Bayne, Nov. 24, 1813, states that there were 250 soldiers aboard Barclay's squadron, of whom 23 were killed, 49 wounded, and the balance (178) captured; and James himself on a previous

page (284) states that there were 102 Canadians on Barclay's vessels, not counting the *Detroit,* and we know that Barclay originally joined the squadron with 19 sailors from the Ontario fleet, and that subsequently 50 sailors came up from the *Dover.* James gives at the end of his "Naval Occurrences" some extracts from the court-martial held on Captain Barclay. Lieut. Thomas Stokes, of the *Queen Charlotte,* there testified that he had on board "between 120 and 130 men, officers and all together," of whom "16 came up from the *Dover* three days before." James, on p. 284, says her crew already consisted of 110 men; adding these 16 gives us 126 (almost exactly "between 120 and 130"). Lieutenant Stokes also testified that the *Detroit* had more men on account of being a larger and heavier vessel; to give her 150 is perfectly safe, as her heavier guns and larger size would at least need 24 men more than the *Queen Charlotte.* James gives the *Lady Prevost* 76, *Hunter* 39, *Little Belt,* 15, and *Chippeway* 13 men; Canadians and soldiers, a total of 143; supposing that the number of British sailors placed on them was proportional to the amount placed on board the *Queen Charlotte,* we could add 21. This would make a grand total of 440 men, which must certainly be near the truth. This number is corroborated otherwise: General Bayne, as already quoted, says that there were aboard 250 soldiers, of whom 72 were killed or wounded. Barclay reports a total loss of 135, of whom 63 must therefore have been sailors or Canadians, and if the

loss suffered by these bore the same proportion to their whole number as in the case of the soldiers, there ought to have been 219 sailors and Canadians, making in all 469 men. It can thus be said with certainty that there were between 440 and 490 men aboard, and I shall take the former number, though I have no doubt that this is too small. But it is not a point of very much importance, as the battle was fought largely at long range, where the number of men, provided there were plenty to handle the sails and guns, did not much matter. The following statement of the comparative force must therefore be very nearly accurate:

PERRY'S SQUADRON.

| Name. | Rig. | Tons. | Total Crew. | Crew fit for Duty. | Broadside; lbs. | Armament. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Lawrence*, | brig | 480 | 136 | 105 | 300 | 2 long 12's<br>18 short 32's |
| *Niagara*, | " | 480 | 155 | 127 | 300 | 2 long 12's<br>18 short 32's |
| *Caledonia*, | " | 180 | 53 | | 80 | 2 long 24's<br>1 short 32 |
| *Ariel*, | schooner | 112 | 36 | | 48 | 4 long 12's |
| *Scorpion*, | " | 86 | 35 | | 64 | 1 " 32<br>1 short 32 |
| *Somers*, | " | 94 | 30 | 184 | 56 | 1 long 24<br>1 short 32 |
| *Porcupine*, | " | 83 | 25 | | 32 | 1 long 32 |
| *Tigress*, | " | 96 | 27 | | 32 | 1 " 32 |
| *Trippe*, | sloop | 60 | 35 | | 24 | 1 " 24 |
| 9 vessels, | | 1,671 | 532 | (416) | 936 lbs. | |

During the action, however, the *Lawrence* and *Niagara* each fought a long 12 instead of one of the carronades on the engaged side, making a broadside of 896 lbs., 288 lbs. being from long guns.

BARCLAY'S SQUADRON.

| Name. | Rig. | Tons. | Crew. | Broadside; lbs. | Armament. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Detroit*, | ship | 490 | 150 | 138 | 1 long 18<br>2 " 24's<br>6 " 12's<br>8 " 9's<br>1 short 24<br>1 " 18 |
| *Queen Charlotte*, | " | 400 | 126 | 189 | 1 long 12<br>2 " 9's<br>14 short 24's |
| *Lady Prevost*, | schooner | 230 | 86 | 75 | 1 long 9<br>2 " 6's<br>10 short 12's |
| *Hunter*, | brig | 180 | 45 | 30 | 4 long 6's<br>2 " 4's<br>2 " 2's<br>2 short 12's |
| *Chippeway*, | schooner | 70 | 15 | 9 | 1 long 9 |
| *Little Belt*, | sloop | 90 | 18 | 18 | 1 " 12<br>2 " 6's |
| 6 vessels, | | 1,460 | 440 | 459 lbs. | |

These six vessels thus threw at a broadside 459 lbs., of which 195 were from long guns.

The superiority of the Americans in long-gun metal was therefore nearly as three is to two, and in corronade metal greater than two to one. The chief fault to be found in the various American accounts is that they sedulously conceal the comparative weight of metal, while carefully specifying the number of guns. Thus, Lossing says: "Barclay had 35 long guns to Perry's 15, and possessed greatly the advantage in action at a distance"; which he certainly did not. The tonnage of the fleets is not so very important: the above tables are probably pretty nearly right. It is, I suppose, impossible to tell exactly the number of men in the two crews. Barclay almost certainly had more than the 440 men I have given him, but in all likelihood some of them were unfit for duty, and the number of his

effectives was most probably somewhat less than Perry's. As the battle was fought in such smooth water, and part of the time at long range, this, as already said, does not much matter. The *Niagara* might be considered a match for the *Detroit,* and the *Lawrence* and *Caledonia* for the five other British vessels; so the Americans were certainly very greatly superior in force.

At daylight on Sept. 10th Barclay's squadron was discovered in the N.W., and Perry at once got under way; the wind soon shifted to the N.E., giving us the weather-gage, the breeze being very light. Barclay lay to in a close column, heading to the S.W. in the following order: *Chippeway*, Master's Mate J. Campbell; *Detroit*, Captain R. H. Barclay; *Hunter,* Lieutenant G. Bignell; *Queen Charlotte*, Captain R. Finnis; *Lady Prevost*, Lieutenant Edward Buchan; and *Little Belt,* by whom commanded is not said. Perry came down with the wind on his port beam, and made the attack in column ahead, obliquely. First in order came the *Ariel,* Lieut. John H. Packet, and *Scorpion,* Sailing-Master Stephen Champlin, both being on the weather bow of the *Lawrence,* Captain O. H. Perry; next came the *Caledonia,* Lieut. Daniel Turner; *Niagara*, Captain Jesse D. Elliott; *Somers*, Lieutenant A. H. M. Conklin; *Porcupine*, Acting-Master George Serrat; *Tigress,* Sailing-Master Thomas C. Almy, and *Trippe*, Lieutenant Thomas Holdup.[28]

[28] The accounts of the two commanders tally almost exactly. Barclay's letter is a model of its kind for candor and

As, amid light and rather baffling winds, the American squadron approached the enemy, Perry's straggling line formed an angle of about fifteen degrees with the more compact one of his foes. At 11.45 the *Detroit* opened the action by a shot from her long 24, which fell short; at 11.50 she fired a second which went crashing through the *Lawrence*, and was replied to by the *Scorpion's* long 32. At 11.55 the *Lawrence*, having shifted her port bow-chaser, opened with both the long 12's, and at meridian began with her carronades, but the shot from the latter all fell short. At the same time the action became general on both sides, though the rearmost American vessels were almost beyond the range of their own guns, and quite out of range of the guns of their antagonists. Meanwhile the *Lawrence* was already suffering considerably as she bore down on the enemy. It was twenty minutes before she succeeded in getting within good carronade range, and during that time the action at the head of the line was between the long guns of the *Chippeway* and *Detroit*, throwing 123 pounds, and those of the *Scorpion*, *Ariel*, and *Lawrence*, throwing 104

generosity. Letter of Captain R. H. Barclay to Sir James, Sept. 2, 1813; of Lieutenant Inglis to Captain Barclay, Sept. 10th; of Captain Perry to the Secretary of the Navy, Sept. 10th and Sept. 13th, and to General Harrison, Sept. 11th and Sept. 13th. I have relied mainly on Lossing's "Field-Book of the War of 1812" (especially for the diagrams furnished him by Commodore Champlin), on Commander Ward's "Naval Tactics," p. 76, and on Cooper's "Naval History." Extracts from the court-martial on Captain Barclay are given in James' "Naval Occurrences," lxxxiii.

pounds. As the enemy's fire was directed almost exclusively at the *Lawrence* she suffered a great deal. The *Caledonia, Niagara,* and *Somers* were meanwhile engaging, at long range, the *Hunter* and *Queen Charlotte*, opposing from their long guns 96 pounds to the 39 pounds of their antagonists, while from a distance the three other American gun-vessels engaged the *Prevost* and *Little Belt.* By 12.20 the *Lawrence* had worked down to close quarters, and at 12.30 the action was going on with great fury between her and her antagonists, within canister range. The raw and inexperienced American crews committed the same fault the British so often fell into on the ocean, and overloaded their carronades. In consequence, that of the *Scorpion* upset down the hatchway in the middle of the action, and the sides of the *Detroit* were dotted with marks from shot that did not penetrate. One of the *Ariel's* long 12's also burst. Barclay fought the *Detroit* exceedingly well, her guns being most excellently aimed, though they actually had to be discharged by flashing pistols at the touchholes, so deficient was the ship's equipment. Meanwhile the *Caledonia* came down too, but the *Niagara* was wretchedly handled, Elliott keeping at a distance which prevented the use either of his carronades or of those of the *Queen Charlotte*, his antagonist; the latter, however, suffered greatly from the long guns of the opposing schooners, and lost her gallant commander, Captain Finnis, and first lieutenant, Mr. Stokes, who were killed early in the action; her next in command,

Provincial Lieutenant Irvine, perceiving that he could do no good, passed the *Hunter* and joined in the attack on the *Lawrence*, at close quarters. The *Niagara*, the most efficient and best-manned of the American vessels, was thus almost kept out of the action by her captain's misconduct. At the end of the line the fight went on at long range between the *Somers, Tigress, Porcupine,* and *Trippe* on one side, and *Little Belt* and *Lady Prevost* on the other; the *Lady Prevost* making a very noble fight, although her 12-pound carronades rendered her almost helpless against the long guns of the Americans. She was greatly cut up, her commander, Lieutenant Buchan, was dangerously, and her acting first lieutenant, Mr. Roulette, severely, wounded, and she began falling gradually to leeward.

The fighting at the head of the line was fierce and bloody to an extraordinary degree. The *Scorpion, Ariel, Lawrence*, and *Caledonia,* all of them handled with the most determined courage, were opposed to the *Chippeway, Detroit, Queen Charlotte*, and *Hunter,* which were fought to the full as bravely. At such close quarters the two sides engaged on about equal terms, the Americans being superior in weight of metal, and inferior in number of men. But the *Lawrence* had received such damage in working down as to make the odds against Perry. On each side almost the whole fire was directed at the opposing large vessel or vessels; in consequence the *Queen Charlotte* was almost disabled, and the *Detroit* was also frightfully shattered, es-

pecially by the raking fire of the gunboats, her first lieutenant, Mr. Garland, being mortally wounded, and Captain Barclay so severely injured that he was obliged to quit the deck, leaving his ship in the command of Lieutenant George Inglis. But on board the *Lawrence* matters had gone even worse, the combined fire of her adversaries having made the grimmest carnage on her decks. Of the 103 men who were fit for duty when she began the action, 83, or over four-fifths, were killed or wounded. The vessel was shallow, and the ward-room, used as a cock-pit, to which the wounded were taken, was mostly above water, and the shot came through it continually, killing and wounding many men under the hands of the surgeon.

The first lieutenant, Yarnall, was three times wounded, but kept to the deck through all; the only other lieutenant on board, Brooks, of the marines, was mortally wounded. Every brace and bowline was shot away, and the brig almost completely dismantled; her hull was shattered to pieces, many shot going completely through it, and the guns on the engaged side were by degrees all dismounted. Perry kept up the fight with splendid courage. As the crew fell one by one, the commodore called down through the skylight for one of the surgeon's assistants; and this call was repeated and obeyed till none was left; then he asked, "Can any of the wounded pull a rope?" and three or four of them crawled up on deck to lend a feeble hand in placing the last guns. Perry himself fired the last effective

heavy gun, assisted only by the purser and chaplain. A man who did not possess his indomitable spirit would have then struck. Instead, however, although failing in the attack so far, Perry merely determined to win by new methods, and remodeled the line accordingly. Mr. Turner, in the *Caledonia,* when ordered to close, had put his helm up, run down on the opposing line, and engaged at very short range, though the brig was absolutely without quarters. The *Niagara* had thus become the next in line astern of the *Lawrence,* and the sloop *Trippe,* having passed the three schooners in front of her, was next ahead. The *Niagara* now, having a breeze, steered for the head of Barclay's line, passing over a quarter of a mile to windward of the *Lawrence,* on her port beam. She was almost uninjured, having so far taken very little part in the combat, and to her Perry shifted his flag. Leaping into a row boat, with his brother and four seamen, he rowed to the fresh brig, where he arrived at 2.30, and at once sent Elliott astern to hurry up the three schooners. The *Trippe* was now very near the *Caledonia.* The *Lawrence,* having but 14 sound men left, struck her colors, but could not be taken possession of before the action recommenced. She drifted astern, the *Caledonia* passing between her and her foes. At 2.45 the schooners having closed up, Perry in his fresh vessel, bore up to break Barclay's line.

The British ships had fought themselves to a standstill. The *Lady Prevost* was crippled and sagged to leeward, though ahead of the others. The

*Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* were so disabled that they could not effectually oppose fresh antagonists. There could thus be but little resistance to Perry, as the *Niagara* stood down, and broke the British line, firing her port guns into the *Chippeway*, *Little Belt*, and *Lady Prevost*, and the starboard ones into the *Detroit*, *Queen Charlotte*, and *Hunter*, raking on both sides. Too disabled to tack, the *Detroit* and *Charlotte* tried to wear, the latter running up to leeward of the former; and, both vessels having every brace and almost every stay shot away, they fell foul. The *Niagara* luffed athwart their bows, within half pistol-shot, keeping up a terrific discharge of great guns and musketry, while on the other side the British vessels were raked by the *Caledonia* and the schooners so closely that some of their grape shot, passing over the foe, rattled through Perry's spars. Nothing further could be done, and Barclay's flag was struck at 3 P.M., after three and a quarter hours' most gallant and desperate fighting. The *Chippeway* and *Little Belt* tried to escape, but were overtaken and brought to respectively by the *Trippe* and *Scorpion*, the commander of the latter, Mr. Stephen Champlin, firing the last, as he had the first, shot of the battle. "Captain Perry has behaved in the most humane and attentive manner, not only to myself and officers, but to all the wounded," writes Captain Barclay.

The American squadron had suffered severely, more than two-thirds of the loss falling upon the *Lawrence*, which was reduced to the condition of a

perfect wreck, her starboard bulwarks being completely beaten in. She had, as already stated, 22 men killed, including Lieutenant of Marines Brooks and Midshipman Lamb; and 61 wounded, including Lieutenant Yarnall, Midshipman (acting second leutenant) Forrest, Sailing-master Taylor, Purser Hambleton, and Midshipmen Swartout and Claxton. The *Niagara* lost 2 killed and 25 wounded (almost a fifth of her effective), including among the latter the second lieutenant, Mr. Edwards, and Midshipman Cummings. The *Caledonia* had 3, the *Somers* 2, and *Trippe* 2, men wounded. The *Ariel* had 1 killed and 3 wounded; the *Scorpion* 2 killed, including Midshipman Lamb. The total loss was 123; 27 were killed and 96 wounded, of whom 3 died.

The British loss, falling most heavily on the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, amounted to 41 killed (including Capt. S. J. Garden, R.N., and Captain R. A. Finnis), and 94 wounded (including Captain Barclay and Lieutenants Stokes, Buchan, Roulette, and Bignall): in all 145. The first and second in command on every vessel were killed or wounded, a sufficient proof of the desperate nature of the defence.

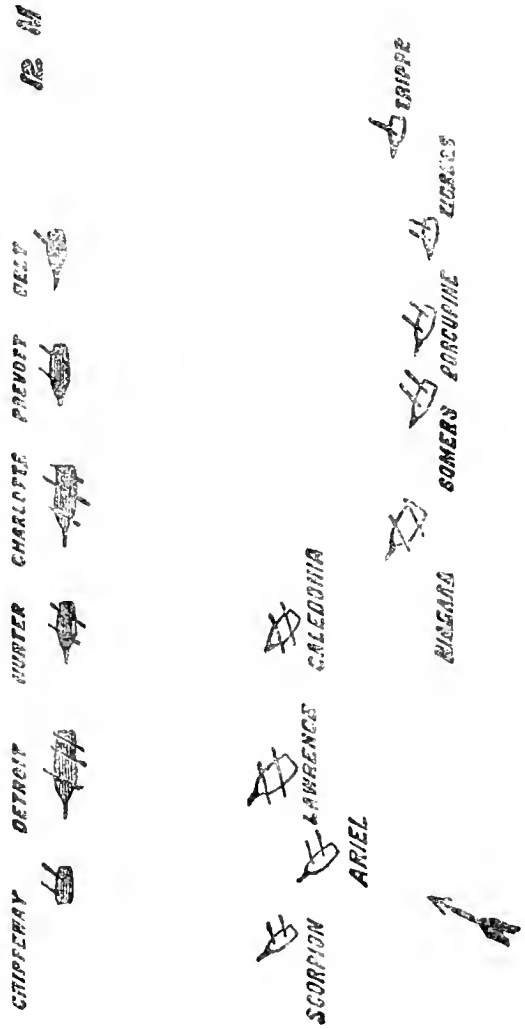
The victory of Lake Erie was most important, both in its material results and in its moral effect. It gave us complete command of all the upper lakes, prevented any fears of invasion from that quarter, increased our prestige with the foe and our confidence in ourselves, and ensured the conquest of up-

per Canada; in all these respects its importance has not been overrated. But the "glory" acquired by it most certainly *has* been estimated at more than its worth. Most Americans, even the well educated, if asked which was the most glorious victory of the war, would point to this battle. Captain Perry's name is more widely known than that of any other commander. Every schoolboy reads about *him*, if of no other sea-captain; yet he certainly stands on a lower grade than either Hull or Macdonough, and not a bit higher than a dozen others. On Lake Erie our seamen displayed great courage and skill; but so did their antagonists. The simple truth is, that, where on both sides the officers and men were equally brave and skilful, the side which possessed the superiority in force, in the proportion of three to two, could not well help winning. The courage with which the *Lawrence* was defended has hardly ever been surpassed, and may fairly be called heroic; but equal praise belongs to the men on board the *Detroit*, who had to discharge the great guns by flashing pistols at the touchholes, and yet made such a terribly effective defence. Courage is only one of the many elements which go to make up the character of a first-class commander; something more than bravery is needed before a leader can be really called great.

There happened to be circumstances which rendered the bragging of our writers over the victory somewhat plausible. Thus they could say with an appearance of truth that the enemy had 63 guns

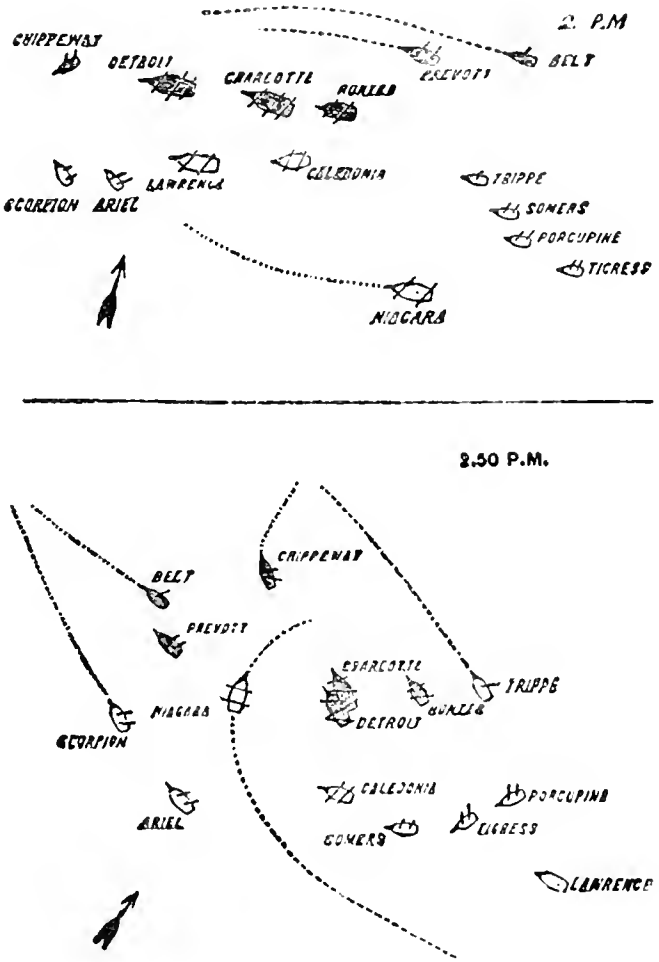
to our 54, and outnumbered us. In reality, as well as can be ascertained from the conflicting evidence, he was inferior in number; but a few men more or

The following diagrams will serve to explain the movements.




less mattered nothing. Both sides had men enough to work the guns and handle the ships, especially as the fight was in smooth water, and largely at

long range. The important fact was that though we had nine guns less, yet, at a broadside, they threw half as much metal again as those of our antagonist. With such odds in our favor it would




have been a disgrace to have been beaten. The water was too smooth for our two brigs to show at their best; but this very smoothness rendered our gunboats more formidable than any of the British

vessels, and the British testimony is unanimous, that it was to them the defeat was primarily due. The American fleet came into action in worse form than the hostile squadron, the ships straggling badly, either owing to Perry having formed his line badly, or else to his having failed to train the subordinate commanders how to keep their places. The *Niagara* was not fought well at first, Captain Elliott keeping her at a distance that prevented her from doing any damage to the vessels opposed, which were battered to pieces by the gunboats without the chance of replying. It certainly seems as if the small vessels at the rear of the line should have been closer up, and in a position to render more effectual assistance; the attack was made in too loose order, and, whether it was the fault of Perry or of his subordinates, it fails to reflect credit on the Americans. Cooper, as usual, praises all concerned; but in this instance not with very good judgment. He says the line-of-battle was highly judicious, but this may be doubted. The weather was peculiarly suitable for the gunboats, with their long, heavy guns; and yet the line-of-battle was so arranged as to keep them in the rear, and let the brunt of the assault fall on the *Lawrence,* with her short carronades. Cooper again praises Perry for steering for the head of the enemy's line, but he could hardly have done anything else. In this battle the firing seems to have been equally skilful on both sides, the *Detroit's* long guns being peculiarly well served; but the British captains manœuvred better than their foes at first,

and supported one another better, so that the disparity in damage done on each side was not equal to the disparity in force. The chief merit of the American commander and his followers was indomitable courage, and determination not to be beaten. This is no slight merit; but it may well be doubted if it would have ensured victory had Barclay's force been as strong as Perry's. Perry made a headlong attack; his superior force, whether through his fault or his misfortune can hardly be said, being brought into action in such a manner that the head of the line was crushed by the inferior force opposed. Being literally hammered out of his own ship, Perry brought up its powerful twin-sister, and the already shattered hostile squadron was crushed by sheer weight. The manœuvres which marked the close of the battle, and which ensured the capture of all the opposing ships, were unquestionably very fine.

The British ships were fought as resolutely as their antagonists, not being surrendered till they were crippled and helpless, and almost all the officers, and a large proportion of the men placed *hors de combat*. Captain Barclay handled his ships like a first-rate seaman. It was impossible to arrange them so as to be superior to his antagonist, for the latter's force was of such a nature that in smooth water his gunboats gave him a great advantage, while in any sea his two brigs were more than a match for the whole British squadron. In short, our victory was due to our heavy metal. As regards the honor of the affair, in spite of the amount of

boasting it has given rise to, I should say it was a battle to be looked upon as in an equally high degree creditable to both sides. Indeed, if it were not for the fact that the victory was so complete, it might be said that the length of the contest and the trifling disparity in loss reflected rather the most credit on the British. Captain Perry showed indomitable pluck and readiness to adapt himself to circumstances; but his claim to fame rests much less on his actual victory than on the way in which he prepared the fleet that was to win it. Here his energy and activity deserve all praise, not only for his success in collecting sailors and vessels and in building the two brigs, but above all for the manner in which he succeeded in getting them out on the lake. On *that* occasion he certainly out-generaled Barclay; indeed the latter committed an error that the skill and address he subsequently showed could not retrieve. But it will always be a source of surprise that the American public should have so glorified Perry's victory over an inferior force, and have paid comparatively little attention to Macdonough's victory, which really was won against decided odds in ships, men, and metal.

There are always men who consider it unpatriotic to tell the truth, if the truth is not very flattering; but, aside from the morality of the case, we never can learn how to produce a certain effect unless we know rightly what the causes were that produced a similar effect in times past. Lake Erie teaches us the advantage of having the odds on our side;

Lake Champlain, that, even if they are not, skill can still counteract them. It is amusing to read some of the pamphlets written "in reply" to Cooper's account of this battle, the writers apparently regarding him as a kind of traitor for hinting that the victory was not "Nelsonic," "unsurpassed," etc. The arguments are stereotyped: Perry had 9 fewer guns, and also fewer men than the foe. This last point is the only one respecting which there is any doubt. Taking sick and well together, the Americans unquestionably had the greatest number in crew; but a quarter of them were sick. Even deducting these they were still, in all probability, more numerous than their foes.

But it is really not a point of much consequence, as both sides had enough, as stated, to serve the guns and handle the ships. In sea-fights, after there are enough hands for those purposes additional ones are not of so much advantage. I have in all my accounts summed up as accurately as possible the contending forces, because it is so customary with British writers to follow James' minute and inaccurate statements, that I thought it best to give everything exactly; but it was really scarcely necessary, and, indeed, it is impossible to compare forces numerically. Aside from a few exceptional cases, the number of men, after a certain point was reached, made little difference. For example, the *Java* would fight just as effectually with 377 men, the number James gives her, as with 426, the number I think she really had. Again, my figures make

the *Wasp* slightly superior in force to the *Frolic*, as she had 25 men the most; but in reality, as the battle was fought under very short sail, and decided purely by gunnery, the difference in number of crew was not of the least consequence. The *Hornet* had nine men more than the *Penguin*, and it would be absurd to say that this gave her much advantage. In both the latter cases, the forces were practically equal, although, numerically expressed, the odds were in favor of the Americans. The exact reverse is the case in the last action of the *Constitution*. Here, the *Levant* and *Cyane* had all the men they required, and threw a heavier broadside than their foe. Expressed in numbers, the odds against them were not great, but numbers could not express the fact that carronades were opposed to long guns, and two small ships to one big one. Again, though in the action on Lake Champlain numbers do show a slight advantage both in weight, metal, and number of men on the British side, they do not make the advantage as great as it really was, for they do not show that the British possessed a frigate with a main-deck battery of 24-pounders, which was equal to the two chief vessels of the Americans, exactly as the *Constitution* was superior to the *Cyane* and *Levant*.[29] And on the same principles I think that

[29] It must always be remembered that these rules cut both ways. British writers are very eloquent about the disadvantage in which carronades placed the *Cyane* and *Levant*, but do not hint that the *Essex* suffered from a precisely similar cause, in addition to her other misfortunes; either they

every fair-minded man must admit the great superiority of Perry's fleet over Barclay's, though the advantage was greater in carronades than in long guns.

But to admit this by no means precludes us from taking credit for the victory. Almost all the victories gained by the English over the Dutch in the 17th century were due purely to great superiority in force. The cases have a curious analogy to this lake battle. Perry won with 54 guns against Barclay's 63; but the odds were largely in his favor. Blake won a doubtful victory on the 18th of February, 1653, with 80 ships against Tromp's 70; but the English vessels were twice the size of the Dutch, and in number of men and weight of metal greatly their superior. The English were excellent fighters,

should give the *Constitution* more credit or the *Phabe* less. So the *Confiance*, throwing 480 pounds of metal at a broadside, was really equal to both the *Eagle* and *Saratoga*, who jointly threw 678. From her long guns she threw 384 pounds, from her carronades 96. Their long guns threw 168, their carronades 510. Now the 32-pound carronade, mounted on the spar-deck of a 38-gun frigate, was certainly much less formidable than the long 18 on the main-deck; indeed, it probably ranked more nearly with a long 12, in the ordinary chances of war (and it must be remembered that Downie was the attacking party and chose his own position, so far as Macdonough's excellent arrangements would let him). So that in comparing the forces, the carronades should not be reckoned for more than half the value of the long guns, and we get, as a mere approximation, $384 + 48 = 432$, against $168 + 255 = 423$. At any rate, British writers, as well as Americans, should remember that if the *Constitution* was greatly superior to her two foes, then the *Confiance* was certainly equal to the *Eagle* and *Saratoga*, and *vice versa*.

but no better than the Dutch, and none of their admirals of that period deserves to rank with De Ruyter. Again, the great victory of La Hogue was won over a very much smaller French fleet, after a day's hard fighting, which resulted in the capture of *one* vessel! This victory was most exultingly chronicled, yet it was precisely as if Perry had fought Barclay all day and only succeeded in capturing the *Little Belt.* Most of Lord Nelson's successes were certainly won against heavy odds by his great genius and the daring skill of the captains who served under him; but the battle of the Baltic, as far as the fighting went, reflected as much honor on the defeated Danes as on the mighty sea-chief who conquered them. Many a much-vaunted victory, both on sea and land, has really reflected less credit on the victors than the battle of Lake Erie did on the Americans. And it must always be remembered that a victory, honorably won, if even over a weaker foe, *does* reflect credit on the nation by whom it is gained. It was creditable to us as a nation that our ships were better made and better armed than the British frigates, exactly as it was creditable to them that a few years before their vessels had stood in the same relation to the Dutch ships.[30] It was greatly to our credit that we had

[30] After Lord Duncan's victory at Camperdown, James chronicled the fact that all the captured line-of-battle ships were such poor craft as not to be of as much value as so many French frigates. This at least showed that the Dutch sailors must have done well to have made such a bloody and

been enterprising enough to fit out such an effective little flotilla on Lake Erie, and for this Perry deserves the highest praise.[31]

Before leaving the subject it is worth while making a few observations on the men who composed the crews. James, who despised a Canadian as much as he hated an American, gives as one excuse for the defeat, the fact that most of Barclay's crew were Canadians, whom he considers to be "sorry substitutes." On each side the regular sailors, from the seaboard, were not numerous enough to permit the battle to be fought purely by them. Barclay took a number of soldiers of the regular army, and Perry a number of militia, aboard; the former had a few Indian sharp-shooters, the latter quite a number of negroes. A great many men in each fleet were lake sailors, frontiersmen, and these were the especial objects of James' contempt; but it may be doubted if they, thoroughly accustomed to lake navigation, used to contests with Indians and whites, naturally forced to be good sailors, and skilful in the use of rifle and cannon, were not, when trained by good men and on their own waters, the very best possible material. Certainly the battle of Lake Erie, fought mainly by Canadians, was better contested

obstinate fight as they did, with the materials they had. According to his own statements, the loss was about proportional to the forces in action. It was another parallel to Perry's victory.

[31] Some of my countrymen will consider this but scant approbation, to which the answer must be that a history is not a panegyric.

than that of Lake Champlain, fought mainly by British.

The difference between the American and British seamen on the Atlantic was small, but on the lakes what little there was disappeared. A New Englander and an Old Englander differed little enough, but they differed more than a frontiersman born north of the line did from one born south of it. These last two resembled one another more nearly than either did the parent. There had been no long-established naval school on the lakes, and the British sailors that came up there were the best of their kind; so the combatants were really so evenly matched in courage, skill, and all other fighting qualities, as to make it impossible to award the palm to either for these attributes. The dogged obstinacy of the fighting, the skilful firing and manœuvring, and the daring and coolness with which cutting-out expeditions were planned and executed, were as marked on one side as the other. The only un-English element in the contest was the presence among the Canadian English of some of the descendants of the Latin race from whom they had conquered the country. Otherwise the men were equally matched, but the Americans owed their success—for the balance of success was largely on their side—to the fact that their officers had been trained in the best and most practical, although the smallest, navy of the day. The British sailors on the lakes were as good as our own, but no better. None of their commanders compares with Macdonough.

Perry deserves all praise for the manner in which he got his fleet ready; his victory over Barclay was precisely similar to the quasi-victories of Blake over the Dutch, which have given that admiral such renown. Blake's success in attacking Spanish and Algerian forts is his true title to fame. In his engagements with the Dutch fleets (as well as in those of Monk, after him) his claim to merit is no greater and no less than Perry's. Each made a headlong attack, with furious, stubborn courage, and by dint of sheer weight crushed or disabled a greatly inferior foe. In the fight that took place on Feb. 18, 1653, De Ruyter's ship carried but 34 guns,[32] and yet with it he captured the *Prosperous* of 54; which vessel was stronger than any in the Dutch fleet. The fact that Blake's battles were generally so indecisive must be ascribed to the fact that his opponents were, though inferior in force, superior in skill. No decisive defeat was inflicted on the Dutch until Tromp's death. Perry's operations were on a very small, and Blake's on a very large, scale: but whereas Perry left no antagonists to question his claim to victory, Blake's successes were sufficiently doubtful to admit of his antagonists in almost every instance claiming that *they* had won, or else that it was a draw. Of course it is absurd to put Perry and Blake on a par, for one worked with a

[32] "La Vie et Les Actions Memorables de Lt.-Admiral Michel De Ruyter" (Amsterdam, 1677), p. 23. By the way, why is Tromp always called Van Tromp by English writers? It would be quite as correct for a Frenchman to speak of MacNelson.

fleet forty times the strength of the other's flotilla; but the way in which the work was done was very similar. And it must always be remembered that when Perry fought this battle he was but 27 years old; and the commanders of his other vessels were younger still.

### CHAMPLAIN

The commander on this lake at this time was Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough, who had superseded the former commander, Lieutenant Sydney Smith,—whose name was a curious commentary on the close inter-relationship of the two contesting peoples. The American naval force now consisted of two sloops, the *Growler* and *Eagle,* each mounting 11 guns, and six galleys, mounting one gun each. Lieutenant Smith was sent down with his two sloops to harass the British gunboats, which were stationed round the head of Sorel River, the outlet to Lake Champlain. On June 3d he chased three gunboats into the river, the wind being aft, up to within sight of the fort of Isle-aux-noix. A strong British land-force, under Major-General Taylor, now came up both banks of the narrow stream, and joined the three gunboats in attacking the sloops. The latter tried to beat up the stream, but the current was so strong and the wind so light that no headway could be made. The gunboats kept out of range of the sloop's guns, while keeping up a hot fire from their long 24's, to which no reply could be made; but the galling fire of the infantry who lined the banks was responded to by showers

of grape. After three hours' conflict, at 12.30, a 24-pound shot from one of the galleys struck the *Eagle* under her starboard quarter, and ripped out a whole plank under water. She sank at once, but it was in such shoal water that she did not settle entirely, and none of the men were drowned. Soon afterward the *Growler* had her forestay and main-boom shot away, and, becoming unmanageable, ran ashore and was also captured. The *Growler* had 1 killed and 8 wounded, the *Eagle* 11 wounded; their combined crews, including 34 volunteers, amounted to 112 men. The British gunboats suffered no loss; of the troops on shore three were wounded, one dangerously, by grape.[33] Lieutenant Smith had certainly made a very plucky fight, but it was a great mistake to get cooped up in a narrow channel, with wind and current dead against him. It was a very creditable success to the British, and showed the effectiveness of well-handled gunboats under certain circumstances. The possession of these two sloops gave the command of the lake to the British. Macdonough at once set about building others, but with all his energy the materials at hand were so deficient that he could not get them finished in time. On July 31st, 1,000 British troops, under Col. J. Murray, convoyed by Captain Thomas Everard, with the sloops *Chubb* and *Finch* (late *Growler* and *Eagle*) and three gun-

[33] Letter from Major-General Taylor (British) to Major-General Stone, June 3, 1813. Lossing says the loss of the British was "probably at least one hundred"—on what authority, if any, I do not know.

boats, landed at Plattsburg and destroyed all the barracks and stores both there and at Saranac. For some reason Colonel Murray left so precipitately that he overlooked a picket of 20 of his men, who were captured; then he made descents on two or three other places, and returned to the head of the lake by Aug. 3d. Three days afterward, on Aug. 6th, Macdonough completed his three sloops, the *President, Montgomery,* and *Preble,* of 7 guns each, and also six gunboats; which force enabled him to prevent any more plundering expeditions taking place that summer, and to convoy Hampton's troops when they made an abortive effort to penetrate into Canada by the Sorel River on Sept. 21st.

BRITISH LOSS ON THE LAKES DURING 1813.

| Name. | Tons. | Guns. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Ship,* | 600 | 24 | Burnt on stocks. |
| *Gloucester,* | 180 | 10 | Taken at York. |
| *Mary,* | 80 | 3 | Burnt. |
| *Drummond,* | 80 | 3 | Captured. |
| *Lady Gore,* | 80 | 3 | " |
| *Schooner,* | 80 | 3 | " |
| *Detroit,* | 490 | 19 | " |
| *Queen Charlotte,* | 400 | 17 | " |
| *Lady Prevost,* | 230 | 13 | " |
| *Hunter,* | 180 | 10 | " |
| *Chippeway,* | 70 | 1 | " |
| *Little Belt,* | 90 | 3 | " |
| 12 vessels, | 2,560 | 109 | |

AMERICAN LOSS.[1]

| Name. | Tons. | Guns. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Growler,* | 112 | 11 | Captured. |
| *Eagle,* | 110 | 11 | " |
| 2 vessels, | 222 | 22 | |

[1] Excluding the *Growler* and *Julia,* which were recaptured.

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